HISTORY OF JEWISH EDUCATION FROM 515 B.C.E. TO 220 C.E.

(During the Periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim)

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1937

BY

NATHAN DRAZIN

(Reprinted from "The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Education," Number 29)

BALTIMORE

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DEDICATED

IN AFFECTION AND IN GRATITUDE

TO MY DEAR PARENTS

AARON AND MALKA DRAZIN

who have, at great self-sacrifice, endeavored to give me a thorough Jewish education in the spirit of the great Sages and Tannaim, whose idealistic educational doctrines and efforts are discussed herein.

PREFACE

The aim and description of this study are set forth in the first few pages of the introductory chapter. Professor Swift's claim that his volume on " Education in Ancient Israel to 70 A. D." is " the first attempt in English to give education in Ancient Israel any such broad treatment as has long been accorded to that of other ancient peoples," stands undisputed. Since the publication of that treatise, another study of considerable merit entitled, " The Jewish School from the Earliest Times to the Year 500 of the Present Era," has been offered by Nathan Morris. Both authors, however, undertook too long a period of Jewish history for exhaustive treatment.

This study is limited to the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim, by which time the Jewish school was fully evolved and tested. It is the first attempt to give a full and comprehensive account of this ancient school system of the Jews.

Problems not directly affecting Jewish education of the said periods are avoided. For this reason, such topics as the canonization of the Bible, the origin of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and similar controversial subjects have been omitted.

This study was originally prepared and submitted to the Board of University Studies of the Johns Hopkins University in 1937 as a doctorate dissertation. Since then a careful revision of the entire manuscript has been made.

The author gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to Professor Florence E. Bamberger, and Doctors E. Earle Franklin, Sidney B. Hoenig and Samuel Rosenblatt for their constructive criticisms and helpful suggestions in the preparation of this volume. To his wife, Celia H. Drazin, the author acknowledges a deep debt of gratitude for her gentle encouragement at all times—a true " help meet." Special thanks are also due Misses Ida Friedman and Edythe Herman.

In conclusion, the author sincerely thanks the Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation of Baltimore, of which he has been the spiritual leader for the last seven years, for their splendid cooperation and indulgence without which this volume would not be possible.

N. D.

October, 1940

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Study and its Purpose
Historical Setting of the Period

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Study and its Purpose

Although the history of education in general has already been studied by many able historians and educators, the special field of Jewish education has not as yet been systematically explored. Its special contributions have in a large measure been ignored. This is true in particular of the post-Biblical period which, to record an irony of fate, should really have been of the greatest interest to the historian of education even if for no other reason than that this period witnessed the evolution of the Jewish school system and the institution of general elementary and secondary education for boys as shown later, not to mention the many other educational reforms of the time that render it the formative period in the development of Jewish education.

The reason for this seemingly enigmatic situation is quite obvious. The Old Testament in translation was wholly available to those who cared to investigate the ancient or Biblical period of Jewish history. Such was not the case, however, with the vast Rabbinic literature which came into existence later and which is indispensable for historical investigation of the classical or post-Biblical period. A knowledge of both Hebrew and Aramaic is still necessary to gain a full understanding of old Rabbinic lore. Because of this difficulty there were not many who could undertake research in this field. Then, too, most educators had been naively of the opinion that Greece and Rome already provided all the desirable educational ideas and practices of classical times. Cubberley's *The History of Education*, for example, contains less than three pages devoted to the history of the Jews, their religion and education, and Monroe's *Text-Book in the History of Educa-*

tion has not even a single page. The colossal work, *Cyclopedia of Education*,[1] devotes barely four pages to Jewish education of the entire ancient period of two thousand years!

Aware, however, of the creative genius of the Jewish people in literature, in religious and moral law during the several centuries following the establishment of the Second Commonwealth one may reasonably conjecture that there would be a good educational system capable of producing such results. So, too, the persistence and preservation of the Jewish nationality to this day may presumably be traced to certain elements in the educational system of the Jews, which already gained clear articulation in this post-Biblical period. An historical and educational research of this period may therefore reasonably be expected to yield new ideas and perspectives of value for contemporary education.

In this study the writer proposes to survey critically and exhaustively the history of Jewish education during approximately seven and one-half centuries, from 515 B. C. E. to 220 C. E., covering the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim up to the redaction of the Mishnah, the great legal digest that for the Jewish people ranks second in importance to the Holy Scriptures. The stated boundary dates have been selected, because though the chronology of these periods is still in dispute, most modern historians agree that at least in 515 B. C. E. the structure of the Second Temple at Jerusalem was already complete. Similarly, 220 C. E. is used because all historians do at least agree that the compilation of the Mishnah by Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, was already finished by that date and many maintain, moreover, that its final redaction was also complete by that time. The name, Tannaim, teachers, is applied to those scholars whose statements are recorded in the Mishnah or in the other contemporary legal works. The first generation of Tan-

[1] For these and other works mentioned in the text, see bibliography at the end of this volume.

naim is generally considered as having commenced *circa* 10 C. E. The Tannaitic period, therefore, comprised approximately two centuries, from 10 to 220 C. E.[2]

The method of procedure involved in this study is of a threefold nature: first, an exploration of the extant Jewish literature of the given periods for data bearing on education and the establishment of their dates of origin so that they may be introduced according to historical sequence; second, an examination of the general system of education of the ancient world in order to detect whatever foreign influences there were in the evolution of Jewish education; and finally, an examination of the Jewish history of the given periods so that the contributing causes of the educational reforms could be ascertained and evaluated with fair reliability.[3]

Before proceeding with the study, three more items of procedure and policy should be clarified. In the first place, wherever direct illustrations from the Mishnah or other ancient sources are used, only the most significant and complete statements are presented so as to avoid undue repetition. Secondly, the term, education, as used in this study must be explained. Although this work lays emphasis upon formal and purposeful education, other agencies or institutions influencing education during the periods under consideration are also examined. Both religious and secular education are included in this treatise. Thirdly, an outline of the complete study follows.

It has been thought advisable to treat all the educational data pertinent to this work under six inclusive headings: philosophy of education, evolution of the school system, administration, content of education, methods and principles of teaching, and education of girls and women. A separate chapter is devoted to each of these topics. In the

[2] Historical dates mentioned in the text here and elsewhere are those generally accepted by modern historians.

[3] The writer hopes eventually to treat in a like manner the earlier and later periods of Jewish history in order to complete and make available the unabridged story of Jewish education from the earliest times to the present.

concluding chapter, Jewish education is compared briefly with the Greek and Roman educational systems. A summary of the important ideas and practices of Jewish education with a statement showing which were and which were not carried over into modern education is also offered. Finally, a bibliography is appended listing separately all the primary and secondary sources that have been consulted for this work.

In order that the significance of the findings and the discussions of this study should be clearly set forth, a brief historical account of the salient events of the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim is presented. Matters directly concerning education are reserved, however, for later chapters.

Historical Setting of the Period

A period of seventy years elapsed between the destruction of the First (586 B. C. E.) and the erection of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. These years are generally referred to as the Babylonian Captivity. As the name suggests, most of the Jews spent those years in Babylonia after its king, Nebuchadnezzar, had destroyed the First Temple and had led the Jews into captivity. Finally when Babylonia had been conquered by the Persians, Cyrus permitted the Jews to go back to their homeland and to rebuild their Temple. The construction of the Second Temple was completed in the year 516 B. C. E.

Not all the Jews, however, then returned to Palestine. In fact, the majority remained in Babylonia. The several tens of thousands who returned to Palestine found large tracts of land settled by foreign people who laid a claim thereto.[4] The land which the Jews were permitted to reoccupy was largely waste and much work was necessary to redeem the soil. There was not enough land at that time

[4] The Talmudic reference to the above is as follows: " many cities that were conquered by those who had gone forth from Egypt were not reconquered by those who had gone out of Babylonia," *Hagigah*, 3b. See also Graetz, 1, 355 ff.

for all the Jews, therefore some had to seek other means of livelihood. Because of this many new industries came into existence giving rise to a group of specialized artisans and craftsmen. The Jubilee Year no longer functioned,[5] hence land could be sold in perpetuity. Thus as the years went on the land became the property of the few, while the many had to gain their livelihood in labor, commerce, or business.

While all the Jews were still in Babylonia and mourning the loss of their sacred Temple, they began to construct synagogues in which the people might gather for divine worship and prayer.[6] Similar synagogues were later established in the country towns of Palestine for those who found the Temple in Jerusalem not easily accessible. From these evolved in a short time "houses of instruction," which are fully discussed later.

Another important event in the cultural life of the Jews in Babylonia was the acquisition of the Aramaic language. This was not a difficult task for the Jewish people, since Hebrew and Aramaic are cognate languages. Aramaic was the predominantly spoken language among the Jews until the rise of Hellenism. Shortly after the construction of the Second Temple, Hebrew script was revolutionized.[7] The new square ("Assyrian") style was very simple in form and, therefore, easily mastered. The later Jewish settlement in Egypt used chiefly the Greek language.

At the beginning of the Second Commonwealth, Palestine was a possession of Persia. When Greece conquered the Persian Empire, the Jews had to pay tribute to this new world power. Following the death of Alexander the Great, Palestine was the possession of either the Ptolemies

[5] For the function of the Jubilee Year, see Leviticus, 25, 8-24. That the laws of the Jubilee Year did not apply throughout the Second Commonwealth is evident from the following Tannaitic source, *Arakin*, 32b, דתניא משגלה שבט ראובן ושבט גד וחצי שבט מנשה בטלו יובלות.

[6] Yavetz, 111, 67 ff.

[7] *Sanhedrin*, 21b, בתחילה ניתנה תורה לישראל בכתב עברי . . . חזרה וניתנה להם בימי עזרא בכתב אשורית. See also Graetz, 1, 395 ff., and Driver's *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

of Egypt or the Seleucids of Syria. It continued as a tributary state until the time of the Maccabean revolt. During all those years the High Priest was head for all matters affecting Jewish life. He was assisted at first by the Men of the Great Assembly and later by the Sanhedrin, bodies of learned men in whom was vested the authority to decide questions of Jewish Law. After the Maccabean victory in 165 B. C. E. Judah eventually became an autonomous state, and the High Priest was also crowned King. It enjoyed national independence for virtually a century. In 63 B. C. E. it came definitely under Roman domination. The theocracy, however, continued without any prolonged interruption until 37 B. C. E. when a monarchy distinct from the High Priesthood was established, thereby separating state and religion officially. This separation persisted as long as the Jewish state lasted.

Prior to the Maccabean victory there arose two opposing Jewish parties: the Hellenists who were willing to accept Greek culture and religion, and the pious Jews, *Hasidim*, who resisted them and aided the Maccabean uprising. About a century later the latter group gave rise to the Pharisees and perhaps to the Essenes, while the Sadducees became in some respects the spiritual heirs of the Hellenists.[8] The Pharisees accepted the oral legal traditions of their fathers which they deemed as sacred as the Written Law included in the Five Books of Moses and with remarkable diligence and precision developed the great legal literature of the Jews, thus becoming the teachers and masters of Israel for future times. The history of Jewish education is, therefore, intimately connected with the scholarly work of these men.

When Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by

[8] The literature on the Pharisees, their origin and rise, as well as their conflicts with the Sadducees, is voluminous. The full bibliography up to the beginning of the present century may be found in Schürer's work. The discussion of this subject has been revived recently by such scholars as Klausner, Herford, Zeitlin, and Finkelstein (see bibliography). The view presented in the text coincides with that of Dr. Joseph Klausner in his book, הבית השני בגדולתו.

Titus of Rome in the year 70 C. E., the Jews were dispersed into many lands. A large number of Jews, however, remained in the smaller towns of Palestine and tried in some measure to preserve their civilization. The large settlements of Jews in Babylonia and Egypt during the Second Commonwealth now increased heavily in numbers. An even greater proportionate increase was experienced by the Jewish settlement at Rome.

Varied, indeed, were the political, social, and economic situations of the Jewish people during these first centuries of exile in foreign lands. The precariousness of their existence varied with the period and the place of their residence. Grave insecurity was the constant concomitant of the entire period of exile. At first, the Jews cherished a strong hope for an immediate restoration of their lost glory. This hope became very dim and faint after the failure of the Bar Kokba uprising of 132-135 C. E., which was supported by such famous men as Rabbi Akiba and his disciples.

Solacing, however, to the Jews in the midst of their woes was the fact that at least a semblance of national organization was still permitted them in their mother-country. The Sanhedrin of seventy elders still continued in office, although its functional character was changed. Previously it was a court; now it was primarily an academy of higher learning. Jews, however, still looked up to it for authoritative guidance in all affairs concerning their private lives. Its head possessed the title of Patriarch (*nasi* or *Rabban*) and was recognized as such by the imperial government. The patriarchal office was retained in Palestine for upward of three centuries.

Chapter II

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The Essential Character of Jewish Education
Educational Ideals and Goals
The Good Life
The Importance of Jewish Education

Chapter II

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The Essential Character of Jewish Education

Probably no word is so misinterpreted in Jewish studies as the term "Jewish education." Many educators and historians have failed to grasp its true significance. The type of education which has been largely influenced by Plato and Aristotle is so well-known that few visualize the existence of other rational but different educational systems. Jewish education is generally considered as "education with Jewish content."

The following quotations from Josephus, the outstanding Jewish historian of ancient times, however reveals in part the true character of Jewish education as distinguished from other systems.

> Indeed, the greatest part of mankind are so far from living according to their own laws, that they hardly know them; but when they have sinned they learn from others that they have transgressed the law.
>
> Our principal care of all is this, to educate our children well; and we think it to be the most necessary business of our whole life to observe the laws that have been given us, and to keep those rules of piety that have been delivered down to us.
>
> Our legislator (Moses) carefully joined the two methods of instruction together; for he neither left the practical exercises to go on without verbal instruction, nor did he permit the hearing of the law to proceed without the exercises for practice.[1]

Jewish education is thus focused upon the study and the observance of the Torah. The best translation of *Torah*, as implied also by Josephus, is Law, when this word is defined to include the Jewish legal and traditional regulation of all of life's activities. Torah is therefore often used as a synonym for Jewish education. In fact,

[1] Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book I., Sec. 12; Book II., Sec. 19.

the Hebrew term for education used in the ancient period under consideration was *Talmud Torah*, the study of Torah. The emphasis of Jewish education is hence not on the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of culture as in our modern systems, but rather on conduct. To say that Jewish education is entirely religious is also misleading unless the nature of Jewish religion is remembered. Even the emphasis on wisdom in the Sacred Writings has reference to the practical exercises of piety as indicated by the following Biblical maxims: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom." [2]

Jewish education was never something extraneous to life or merely an instrument that served to prepare for life and that later could be discarded when its utility was exhausted. Jewish education was rather synonymous with life. It unfolded life, giving it direction and meaning. In fact a modern Hebrew term for education, *Hinuk*, from a root found twice in the Bible in the sense of "to train," [2a] etymologically means dedication or initiation, and hence may refer to the fact that the child on receiving Jewish education was dedicating his life to the service of God and to the observance of all His laws. This has been the characteristic essence of Jewish education from the earliest times and especially so in the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim.

Jewish education was hence essentially character education. The Pentateuch, the source of all Jewish education, was not studied as literature but rather as the text of the Law that provided even the child with a broad outline of the complete ethical and religious life. Josephus credits Moses with saying, "Let the children also learn the laws, as the first thing they are taught, which will be the best thing they can be taught, and will be the cause of their future felicity." [3] The Books of the Prophets and the

[2] Proverbs, 9, 10; 15, 33.

[2a] Genesis, 14, 14, וירק את חניכיו; Proverbs, 22, 6, חנך לנער על פי דרכו.

[3] *Antiquities of the Jews*, IV., chapter 8, 12.

Hagiographa that were available emphasized many duties in which the Jews in the past had been found wanting. The study of these books served as an admonition and exhortation to the child to fear God, the Creator and Ruler of all things, and to follow rigidly all His teachings handed down to the children of Israel by His servant, Moses. The historical accounts related quite frequently in those books were believed and taught as intended solely for their moral lessons. "The deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children." [4] Philo's books on the Bible are extreme examples of this fact.

As the child grew older he began to study the manifold details of the various laws, most of which were believed to have been given orally to Moses simultaneously with the Written Law. From these details the adult mind would later evolve certain principles that would serve as a guide to new situations that might arise in life. Proper solutions for all novel problems of conduct could hence be safely and logically deduced by analogy or other methodical ways of reasoning that were taught and actually practiced in the higher schools discussed later.

These factors contributed also toward the almost universality of adult education among the Jews. Not only were fully mature persons enjoined to review constantly all that they had formerly learned lest they forget something and commit a sin, but they were drawn to it by appreciation of the fact that they had not learned as much as there was to learn of the Torah. Jewish education was as endless and as intricate and as subtle as life itself. "The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." [5] Its infiniteness in scope and depth elicited great admiration on the part of its adherents as evidenced by the following statement of one of the Sages during the Second Commonwealth: "Turn it (the Torah) and turn

[4] Although this expression was coined at a later date (see e. g. Midrash Rabba, Genesis, 68), there can be no doubt to one familiar with the teachings of the Tannaim that the purport of the statement was known and adhered to for many preceding generations.

[5] Job, 11, 9.

it over again for everything is in it, and contemplate it and grow grey and old over it and stir not from it for thou canst have no better rule than it." [6]

The levels of education previously referred to were clearly set forth by one of the late Tannaim, Judah ben Tema. The ages of five, ten, and fifteen respectively were designated by him for the study of Mikra, Mishnah, and Gemara or Talmud.[7] These three stages fall neatly in line with our modern divisions of elementary, secondary, and higher education. This point, however, must not be overlooked; there was no abrupt change from one level to the next. The three stages were really a gradual and continuous development of the study of Torah.

Secular knowledge was brought to the child not as separate bits of knowledge, but in relation to the Law. In studying, for example, the laws of permitted and forbidden foods, one learned directly and indirectly many facts of botany, zoology, physiology, anatomy, hygiene, and medicine as may be evidenced by the extant work, the Mishnah. To understand the Jewish calendar, the child had to be made familiar with certain elements of astronomy. So, too, in studying the laws pertaining to distances that one was permitted to walk on the Sabbath, the pupil learned certain facts of arithmetic and geometry. The narrative portions of the Bible supplied the child with certain facts of history and geography. Thus the study of Torah completely integrated life.

Specialized vocational and industrial training was achieved by the method of apprenticeship. Most of the children followed the trades and professions of their fathers. These arts and crafts were always regulated in conformity with the requirements of Jewish Law. The farmer, for example, had to observe the many laws relative to sowing a field with diverse kinds of seeds, the tithes and other offerings, the Sabbatical year, and kindred matters.

[6] Aboth, 5, 22.

[7] *Ibid.*, 5, 21. These terms are fully defined in the fifth chapter, "Content of Education."

The carpenter and other craftsmen had to know measurements, weights, the various qualities of the tools and materials they worked with, and their respective names, in order that they might consummate an honest contract or an honest day's work. On having acquired the technical skill of his life's occupation and on having completed his formal schooling, the young adult was prepared for life and was ready to enter the world of affairs. The educational process, through its very nature, accomplished this.

Educational Ideals and Goals

Seventy years prior to the construction of the Second Temple the Jewish people saw their own kingdom crushed by the powerful Babylonian empire. During the Captivity they witnessed the great glory of wealth and power that their conquerors enjoyed. They saw Babylonia as a world empire, serene and mighty. Yet within another generation the world trembled with a new upheaval. Babylonia was overthrown by a still more powerful people that laid it low without pity. The Jews, being permitted now to return to their homeland by Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire, heeded the words of the Prophet who proclaimed that the survival of their own nation, small and weak as it was, can be assured not by fortresses, " not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." [8] These words were construed to mean that Jewish nationhood must rest on a spiritual foundation. There ensued hence a revival of all the traditional customs and laws that became more articulate with the coming of Ezra and Nehemiah into Palestine. This spiritual reawakening brought with it a parallel ideal of education.

This may be termed the nationalistic ideal of Jewish education. The term, " nationalistic ideal," is used in a different sense than the " national ideal " of education of the nineteenth century which aimed to preserve the national state through a unified secular system of education. The " nationalistic ideal " of the Second Common-

[8] Zechariah, 4, 6.

wealth aimed to make religious education the goal of Jewish nationality. Its expression is found already in Deuteronomy where Israel is admonished to observe all the commandments for the following reason: " for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that, when they hear all these statutes, shall say: 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' " [9] This ideal is also implied in the earlier Biblical words: " and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." [10]

This Utopian dream always sought interpretation and realization in periods of great stress and strife in Jewish history. A complete return to all the laws and customs of their fathers and the intensification and spread of their education would, it was felt, not only assure the survival of their people but, what was more, give the Jewish nation a high and distinct position among the nations of the world.

Such was the case early in the Hellenistic period. The Men of the Great Assembly then put into effect their decree: " Raise up many students." [11] The factional strife prevalent in the Maccabean period prepared the way for Simon ben Shetah's contribution. The stress and uncertainties of the Roman period gave birth to the great contributions of Joshua ben Gamala and Johanan ben Zakkai. The defeat of Bar Kokba similarly gave rise in the next generation to the compilation of the Mishnah. As one Sage expressed it in those days, " all the good gifts that were granted to the Jews were taken away from them, and if not for the Book of Torah that remained with them, they would be no different from the nations of the world." [12] Torah or Jewish education, considered Israel's special endowment, was jealously preserved and enhanced.

[9] Deuteronomy, 4, 6.

[10] Exodus, 19, 6.

[11] Aboth, 1, 1. The various educational contributions mentioned in this paragraph are discussed in the following chapter.

[12] Sifra on Leviticus, 26, 44, כל מתנות טובות שנתנו להם ניטלו מהם ואילולי ס"ת שנשתיירה להם לא היו משנים מא"ה כלום.

Parallel with the nationalistic ideal of education was the religious motive. This latter ideal transcended in fact all the others during the entire ancient period of Jewish history on account of the very nature and content of Jewish education. It is often repeated in the Pentateuch. King Solomon is credited with saying, " The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." [13] It also abounds in various garbs in the vast Tannaitic literature.

This ideal of religious piety when analyzed is found to be a composite of two aspects: a full knowledge of the Law and a strict observance thereof in practice. That both aspects were held as highly important can be seen from the seemingly contradictory opinions of certain Tannaim: " not learning but doing is the chief thing " and " learning is greater, for learning brings one to practice." [14] Ideally both these aspects should blend harmoniously; the eager and willing acceptance of the Law preceding, however, its complete understanding thereby showing humble trust in God's infinite wisdom. Only the education that was achieved in this manner was in their judgment lasting, dignified, and deserving of heavenly awards. " He whose works are more abundant than his wisdom, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are many, so that even if all the winds in the world come and blow against it, it cannot be stirred from its place." [15]

Jewish religion, furthermore, invested education with sacredness and importance. The Rabbis interpreted the Biblical words, " and ye shall teach them to your children," to mean that every male adult was obligated to study Torah and to teach it to his sons.[16] Although theoretically this obligation could be discharged with the reading of certain Biblical verses morning and evening,[17] that was not the case in practice. To observe all the laws of his

[13] Proverbs, 1, 7.
[14] Aboth, 1, 17 and Kiddushin, 40b.
[15] Aboth, 3, 17.
[16] Deuteronomy, 11, 19; Kiddushin, 29a and b.
[17] Menahoth, 99b, אר"י משום ר"ש בן יוחי אפילו לא קרא אדם אלא קרית שמע שחרית וערבית קיים לא ימוש.

faith, the Jew had to be highly educated. Hillel aptly said, " An empty-headed man cannot be a sinfearing man, nor can an ignorant person be pious." [18] Moreover, the more one engaged in the study of Torah all the greater the happiness he was to enjoy in this world and in the world to come. As one Sage appropriately put it, " if thou labourest in the Law He has abundant reward to give thee." [19] Morally, too, everyone was obligated to make utmost use of the talents and faculties with which he was endowed. " If thou hast wrought much in the Law claim not merit for thyself, for to this end wast thou created." [20]

These nationalistic and religious ideals of education gave rise to a third goal, namely, to universalize Jewish education. The story of the attempt to realize this ideal is given in the following chapter. Although this wish as expressed by Isaiah, " and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord," [21] may have existed with some individuals in earlier periods, it did not come to pervade the minds of all the Jewish leaders as it did at the end of the Second Commonwealth. No longer did the leaders of Israel want the full knowledge of the Torah confined to a select few, like the priests and prophets, as it was in the earlier periods of Jewish history. In fact, the prevailing wish now was that every Jew might become a guardian priest of Torah. The achievement of this idealistic enterprise, it was now keenly felt, would also bring realization and fulfillment of the former ideals. Such a result would certainly gain the favor of God, and national prosperity would henceforth be assured.

A great aid in the achievement of this goal of universal education was the emphasis that was put upon the obligation of teaching to others what one has already learned for himself. This duty was clearly articulated in the Tannaitic writings. Rabbi Meir, for example, said, " Of

[18] Aboth, 2, 5.

[19] *Ibid.*, 4, 10. See also Peah, 1, 1, אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהן בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא . . . ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם.

[20] Aboth, 2, 8.

[21] Isaiah, 54, 13.

him who learns Torah but does not teach it, is written 'he hath despised the word of the Lord.'"[22] Rabbi Akiba, similarly, taught that if one had raised many disciples in his young age, he should continue to do so even when he grew old.[23] The Sages, moreover, held that pupils were called in the Bible, children, and the teacher their father. Hence they interpreted the Biblical precept, "thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," to mean that the teacher was obligated to take good care of his profession.[24] One instance of the above was that the teacher was required to teach the lesson to his pupil until the child knew it and was able to recite it without hesitation.[25] In turn the teacher had to be honored and respected even more than a father or mother, for the latter only bring the child into this world while the former brings his pupil into the blessings of this world and the world to come.[26] This honor was not merited in vain, for teachers were not permitted to accept any compensation for teaching Torah. They were required to emulate Moses, who cheerfully taught all the children of Israel without thought of material reward.[27]

While the universalization of elementary education for the young was desired by all the Sages and Tannaim, we do find conflicting views regarding higher education.[28] The School of Shammai held that it should be restricted only to those who were wise, modest, wealthy, and of good family. They probably thought that these would form a select group that would continue intact all the traditions. These would eventually become the true leaders of Jewry

[22] Sanhedrin, 99a. The Biblical phrase referred to is in Numbers, 15, 31.
[23] Tanhuma, חיי שרה, 6.
[24] Sifri on Deuteronomy, 6, 7, ושננתם לבניך אלו תלמידיך
[25] Mekilta, Exodus, 21, 1, רע"א . . . אין לי אלא פעם אחת מנין שנה ושלש ורבע עד שילמדו תלמוד לומר ולמדה את בני ישראל וכו'.
[26] Baba Metzia, 2, 11; Sifri, Deuteronomy, 6, 5.
[27] Bekhoroth, 29a, תניא כאשר צוני ה' מה אני בחנם אף אתם בחנם.
[28] Aboth of Rabbi Nathan, end of chapter 2, שב"ש אומרים אל ישנה אדם אלא למי שהוא חכם ועניו ובן אבות ועשיר וב"ה אומרים לכל אדם ישנה שהרבה פושעים היו בהם בישראל ונתקרבו לתלמוד תורה ויצאו מהם צדיקים חסידים וכשרים.

whose rulings would be readily accepted. The School of Hillel, putting great faith in the educative and therapeutical effects of Torah, were of the contrary opinion. They wished that higher education should be offered to all. In the next chapter we will show how this controversy was finally resolved.

Another educational ideal of the period of the Tannaim was expressed by one spokesman as follows: " Excellent is the study of the Law combined with some worldly occupation, for toil in them both puts sin out of mind. But all study of the Law without some labor comes in the end to naught and brings sin in its train." [29] During the Second Commonwealth the spiritual leaders were chiefly priests (Kohanim) whose livelihood was amply provided for by various Biblical regulations. It was, therefore, no accident that toward the close of the First Commonwealth the Scroll of the Torah was found in the Temple or that Ezra and most of the Sages during the Second Commonwealth were priests. " The lips of the priest should keep knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." [30] These priests usually disdained all worldly occupations and held them in contempt. They argued that manual labor must distract one's thought and attention from his studies, thus not permitting the attainment of wisdom. A good instance of their point of view is preserved in the writings of Jesus ben Sira, who traditionally was a priest.[31] Whether this view was influenced by the Greek philosophers or whether the reverse was true is a very difficult matter to ascertain. When the Temple was destroyed, however, many of the gifts for the priests ceased. So, too, many of the Tannaim now

[29] Aboth, 2, 2.

[30] Malachi, 2, 7.

[31] Ecclesiasticus, 38, 24 to end of chapter. Regarding the conflicting views on the question whether ben Sira was a priest, see the Jewish Encyclopedia on " Sirach " and the " Introduction " by Judah Leib ben Zabe to his translation of Ecclesiasticus into Hebrew. The author is of the opinion that the view expressed by ben Sira regarding manual crafts definitely marks him as of the family of priests.

were not of the family of priests. What should these scholars do for a living? Their ideal came to be exactly the opposite of that of ben Sira and of the Greek philosophers. They no longer despised manual work. On the contrary, they taught, " Love labor and hate lordship and seek not acquaintance with the ruling power." [32] It is interesting to note that these words were first uttered, about a century before the destruction of the Second Temple, by Shemaiah, who, as an exception to the general rule, was not a priest. To make a living from teaching was objectionable as it was forbidden by Jewish Law. Generally the Rabbis held that all honest work that provided one with subsistence was dignified and honorable. Self-support would, furthermore, make one completely independent and uninfluenced in his judgment in questions of Jewish law. Hence we find recorded that many Tannaim were actually engaged in all the various trades, crafts and arts that were prevalent in those days.[33] The few exceptions to this rule are listed in the chapter on " Administration."

One exception, however, must be noted. This exception is in the realm of theory. Some few Tannaim still held the contrary ideal: " He that takes upon himself the yoke of the Law, from him the yoke of the kingdom and the yoke of worldly care shall be removed." [34] In actual practice the Talmud records only the name of Rabbi Simon ben Yohai, who successfully lived up to this ideal and who was provided for in a miraculous manner.[35]

The ideal, however, that was actually practiced by the great majority of the Tannaim was to engage in some handicraft, just enough to eke out a meagre existence, and to spend the balance of their time in the study and in the teaching of Torah. As Rabbi Meir briefly expressed it,

[32] Aboth, 1, 10.

[33] A reliable book on this subject in Hebrew is that of Rabbi Leopold Greenwald entitled " The Economic Status of the Rabbis," המצב הכלכלי של חז"ל. This is one volume of the larger work called תלמוד בבלי וירושלמי.

[34] Aboth, 3, 5. See also the last Mishnah of Kiddushin.

[35] Berakoth, 35b; Sabbath, 33b.

" engage not overmuch in business but occupy thyself with the Law." [36] In fact the Rabbis also ordained that every father was obligated to teach his son a craft as a means of support, preferably one that was clean and easy. Rabbi Akiba also obligated the father to teach his son how to swim so that he could save his life in time of peril.[37]

There still remains one matter that needs to be discussed. We do not find in the periods here investigated education idealized for its own sake. Some Greek philosophers held this point of view. They taught that abstract intellectual speculation yielded the greatest happiness, was the special privilege and sign of a freeman, and should be indulged in for this reason alone. Some modern educators still hold a similar view in regard to liberal education. The essential character of Jewish education, however, made the acceptance of such a theory by the Jewish Sages clearly impossible. It was a perversion of the religious aim of Torah of putting its teachings into practice. The idiom, *Torah lishmah,*[38] " Torah for its own sake," hence has a different connotation in Tannaitic literature. It refers to the fact that no worldly use was permitted of the " crown of the Torah." Even the pursuit of studies for the purpose of obtaining a title like Sage, Rabbi, or elder, or some other honor was highly reprehensible.[39] One should rather endeavor to learn " Torah for its own sake," namely, for a full familiarity of all its sacred teachings in order to practice more and more of the moral and religious obligations that the Law demanded of him and not in order to secure material gains. " He that learns in order to teach is granted the means to learn and to teach; but he that learns in order to perform is granted the means to learn and to teach, to observe and to perform." " He whose wisdom is more abundant than his deeds, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are abundant but whose roots are

[36] Aboth, 4, 10.
[37] Last Mishnah of Kiddushin; Mekilta, Exodus, 13, 13.
[38] Aboth, 6, 1.
[39] Nedarim, 62a, תניא ... שלא יאמר אדם אקרא שיקראוני חכם אשנה שיקראוני רבי אשנן שאהיה זקן וכו׳.

few, and the wind comes and uproots it and overturns it." [39a] Education, similarly, was not idealized as an avocation for leisure. On the contrary a great deal of leisure was necessary in order to make reasonable progress in the required study of the Torah.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the nationalistic and religious ideals, the universalization of Jewish education, and the combination of Torah with some worldly occupation formed four basic ideals that directed and molded the practices of Jewish education during the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. Other educational goals found in the literature of these periods, if analyzed, will be found to be fragmentary interpretations or elaborations of the above.

The Good Life

Having examined the essential character of Jewish education and the various ideals that motivated and directed it and having seen therefrom the great emphasis that was put on the strict observance of the Law, a presentation of the ideal good life that the Torah aimed to establish is now in order. Only a mere outline of it is here attempted, however.

The precepts of the Torah can be classified under two headings: those that pertain to the duty of man to God, and those that relate between man and man. Among the former, the first and foremost duty is the belief that there is One God Who is the Creator of all things. " One must first take upon him the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and afterward take upon him the yoke of the commandments." [40] That the conception of pure monotheism was already prevalent among the Jews during the days of the Second Commonwealth is generally admitted. From the beginning of that period we have the familiar and inspiring words of the Prophet: " Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacher-

[39a] Aboth, 4, 5; 3, 18.

[40] Berakoth, 2, 2.

ously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers?"[41] The Sages and the Tannaim of this early period believed that this notion of the nature of God had already been fully disclosed by Moses.[42] In accepting this belief of monotheism the Jews were commanded to love God and to fear Him and to emulate His noble and gracious qualities, made known through His Prophets.[43] Above all one had to be humble and slow to anger.[44] Jealousy, lust, and the seeking of glory were contemptible. These traits had to be abandoned entirely. On the other hand one had also to guard himself from becoming an ascetic and from forbidding himself pleasures that were actually permitted by the Torah.[45]

The Talmud records that Hillel the Elder once said that the Golden Rule, "what is hateful to thee, do not unto another," was inclusive of the entire Torah, all the rest being only commentary.[46] He thereby implied that the principle of true brotherhood was inclusive of all the divine commandments and precepts. Since the Torah, however, contains many laws that pertain only to the duty of man toward his Creator, the question naturally arises how could Hillel's Golden Rule possibly include such precepts. The answer involves another Tannaitic principle: "All Jews are sureties for one another."[47] If one Jew defaults or errs, all Jews are held responsible. Hence, no Jew could violate any law of the Torah without transgressing at the same time this principle of brotherhood.

Jewish ethics, therefore, were not confined to those matters arising between man and man that demand complete honesty, uprightness, and kindliness, but they were also concerned with all the actions of man, even those of a most personal nature.[48] All of man's activities

[41] Malachi, 2, 10.

[42] An interesting brief statement of this view is found in Josephus' *Against Apion*, Book II., Sec. 17. See also the works of Philo, especially "On the Decalogue."

[43] Sabbath, 133b; Mekilta, Exodus, 15, 2.

[44] Gittin, 36b.

[45] Taanith, 11a.

[46] Sabbath, 31a.

[47] See Sotah, 37b.

[48] See e. g. Berakoth, 62a, and Niddah, 13a.

had to be pleasing in the sight of God, from Whom nothing is hidden. Since a healthy body can accomplish most in God's service, a person was obligated to safeguard his health. Hence we find many hygienic and sanitary prescriptions in the Tannaitic literature. Athletic activity as a mere matter of sport, an end in itself, was disdained and discouraged. In brief, in whatever activity one engaged, be it work, talk, or thought, he had to remember the presence of God and be guided by His Will. This was the fundamental rule of Jewish ethics. In reference to this principle the Rabbis taught that man should image the whole world hanging in balance, the merits of the people nicely balancing their transgressions. With any new deed, good or bad, the scales of the world would be weighed down accordingly to merit or guilt. " Fortunate and happy is the man that causes the good deeds of the whole world to overbalance its sins and woe to the man who does the contrary! " [49] Such imagery was thought to be conducive to good ethical conduct.

In case, however, a transgression was unwittingly committed, a person had to do penitence and, in some cases, also bring a sacrifice to the Temple in Jerusalem. When the Temple was destroyed, all sacrifices ceased and prayer was instituted in their place. It was generally recommended that a person should carefully survey his past actions at regular intervals, and if these were found unrighteous in any respect, to repent and pray for forgiveness. Penitence involved two important phases: keen regret for the past evil deed and a firm resolution for improvement in the future. In case the sin was committed against a fellow man, it could never be abrogated unless that individual's pardon was humbly sought and obtained.[50]

Further mention should be made of those religious duties the performance of which was obligatory at frequent intervals. Usually the children were also initiated into these practices long before reaching adulthood, the

[49] Kiddushin, 40b.

[50] Yoma, 8, 9.

age of thirteen (Bar Mitzvah). Prayers were recited three times a day, morning, afternoon, and evening. Special benedictions were said before and after eating, expressing gratitude to God for having provided the various foods. The hands had to be washed before and after partaking of a meal. They also had to be washed every morning on rising and always after attending to one's physical wants. In reciting the morning prayers one had to wear the *tefillin* and *tallit* with *zizit*, which served to impress one with the Unity of God and the sacred duty of observing all His commandments.[51] The *mezuzah* [52] on the doorpost served a similar purpose. The daily prayers had to be recited preferably in the synagogue and with a quorum of ten men. Sections of the Pentateuch were read four times a week at the services, twice on the Sabbath and once on every Monday and Thursday mornings.[53] Numerous benedictions had to be memorized and recited at all kinds of special occasions. The Sabbath and all the festivals had to be strictly observed in all their details. The second Order of the Mishnah, *Moed*, contains practically a description of all these details. One was expected, furthermore, to set for himself a fixed period morning and evening, and to grasp any other available opportunities, for the study of Torah. Similarly, hospitality and acts of loving-kindness to strangers and to the needy were religious obligations unlimited by time.

This brief sketch of some of the regular duties of every Jew is cited to show how Judaism invested life with sanctity. Through the daily prayers and the various benedictions, a person was continuously in communion with God. The good life was thus a holy life. It did not disdain, however, worldly affairs and pleasures, if these were morally and ethically becoming. Jewish ethics, on the whole, were highly practical. That may have been the cause of their popularity, because the masses of the people

[51] Sifri, Numbers, 15, 39.

[52] A description of these articles can be found in any reference book on Jewish customs and ceremonials.

[53] Baba Kama, 82a.

held in high esteem their Sages and masters and honored them for their wise moral teachings and piety. This love was also carried over into Jewish education for which the greatest respect was shown.

The Importance of Jewish Education

The survey of the educational ideals of the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim revealed the close relationship existing then between education and the ideal good life. There remains to be discussed the very high regard that was shown in these periods for Jewish education as a part of their philosophy of education. Numerous statements, sufficient to fill a large volume, found in the extant writings of these periods reveal this esteem. A few sampling quotations have been selected for consideration here.

Education has always been the pride and the cherished ideal of the Jewish people. In the words of Simon the Just, in the third century B. C. E., Torah is the first of the three pillars upon which the entire world is founded.[54] That education should have been of such prime importance in their thinking is quite natural since they held that knowledge, logically, must precede the practice of well-directed activities. Of all education that of the children and of youth was held as the most important.

The Book of Psalms, intensively studied and used in those days for the ritual in the Temple and for prayers in the Synagogues, had expressed this ideal very significantly as follows: "our sons are as plants grown up in their youth." [55] The implication here was well understood. Just as the agriculturist has to take special care of his young plants so that he may have assurance that they will grow to be healthy fruit-bearing trees, so, too, they thought if care was given to educate young children

[54] Aboth, 1, 2. The identification of this Simon is still in dispute. See "The History of the High Priests" in Hebrew by Rabbi Leopold Greenwald.

[55] Psalms, 144, 12.

properly, parents or teachers might reasonably expect the children to grow to be good pious Jews, " delighting God and man." Youth was recognized as the great formative period of life in which future character was molded and directed. This thought was uppermost in the minds of the Jewish educators of these periods and they were unanimous in desiring universal elementary education. The psychological significance of the Biblical verse, " Train a child in the way he should go, so that even when he is old, he will not depart from it," [56] was fully understood and appreciated. The Rabbis, in fact, preached similar proverbs of their own. " When one learns Torah in his childhood, the words of the Torah seep into his blood and come out distinctly from his mouth." [57] To neglect the education of the youth was felt to be an irreparable loss. " He that learns as a child, to what is he like? To ink written on new paper. He that learns as an old man, to what is he like? To ink written on paper that has been blotted out." [58] In fact a scholar was not permitted to dwell in a town that had no teacher for the children.[59]

The importance attached to Jewish education in those days is also evidenced from the following saying of Jose ben Joezer of Zeredah, who lived about two generations after Simon the Just, " Let thy house be a meeting-house for the Sages and sit in the dust at their feet and drink in their words with thirst." A generation later Joshua ben Perahyah taught, " Provide thyself with a teacher and get thee a companion." [60] These latter words implied that one should never discontinue his education but always endeavor to increase his knowledge by the aid of learned teachers and companions.

The high regard with which the masses of the people

[56] Proverbs, 22, 6.

[57] Aboth of Rabbi Nathan, chapter 24.

[58] Aboth, 4, 20.

[59] Sanhedrin, 17b, תניא כל עיר שאין בה עשרה דברים הללו אין תלמיד חכם רשאי לדור בתוכה . . . ומלמד תינוקות.

[60] Aboth, 1, 4 and 6. In reference to the given explanation see Hagiga, 1, 7.

looked upon education and the educated is illustrated by the following incident which is related in the Talmud. It was customary when the High Priest came out of the Holy of Holies unharmed on the Day of Atonement that all the people accompanied him to his home with cheers. Once, about the middle of the first century before the common era, while the people were giving an ovation of this kind to the High Priest, two Sages, Shemaiah and Abtalion, happened to pass by. At once all the people who were gathered there left the High Priest and followed these two Sages to the evident discomfiture of the former.[61] The extremely high esteem in which Torah was held by some is attested by the words of a Jewish spokesman: "Our law was made agreeably to the will of God . . . What is there in it that anybody would change! And what can be invented better! Or what can we take out of other people's laws that will exceed it!" [62]

The study of the Torah was regarded as so important that the Rabbis maintained that even poverty was no excuse for its neglect. Hillel was held as a shining example in this respect. He worked as a woodcutter each day in order to earn a tropaic, half of which he used for providing himself and his family with the bare necessities of life and the other half he used as admission fee for entering the college of Shemaiah and Abtalion. One wintry day, it is related, he found no employment and was not admitted into the college. Thereupon he climbed to the roof of the building and listened through the skylight to the discourses of his masters. When finally discovered, several feet of snow covered his body. Neither great wealth nor indulgence in physical pleasures were permitted to serve as excuses for neglecting the Torah.[63]

Education was regarded as a very important and sacred matter for the Jews. Unlike the Greeks and Romans, therefore, the Jews did not entrust the education of their

[61] Yoma, 71b.
[62] Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book II., Sec. 22.
[63] Yoma, 35b.

young to slaves. Notwithstanding the good character and attainments of some of the Greek and Roman slaves, the Jews were unwilling to entrust them with the future of their children. Slaves were never taught Torah and were never used as teachers.[64] Tabi, the slave of Rabban Gamaliel, although he was said to have been a learned scholar,[65] was no exception to the above rule. He attained knowledge of the Law indirectly, by attending constantly to his master. That teaching was considered a sacred task is evident from the Biblical verse, " and they that turn the many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever," which was interpreted as referring to the teachers of children, whose heavenly award was to be endless.[66]

Honor and special consideration was shown to every man who belonged to the aristocracy of learning no matter how humble otherwise was his station in life. The Rabbis, for instance, taught that " the bastard that is learned in the Law precedes the High Priest that is ignorant of the Law." Similarly, if a scholar and the King of Israel be taken captive, it was ordained that the scholar must be ransomed first for if he was put to death no one could take his place while if this fate overcame the King of Israel, all Jews were qualified for kingship.[67] Such was the respect and honor paid to the torchbearers of Torah. The importance of education is further attested to by the fact that the disciples of the Sages were permitted to stay away from home for thirty days against the will of their wives while they occupied themselves in the study of the Law.[68] Since the constant desire of the Rabbis was to preserve " the peace of the home," this decree is significant.

Torah was furthermore held to be a " rejoicing of the heart." Hence it was ordained that mourners for the first seven days of intense mourning during which they had to refrain from all joys ought not also to indulge in the study of Torah. Exception was made, however, for the

[64] Ketuboth, 28a.
[65] Sukkah, 2, 1.
[66] Daniel, 12, 3; Baba Batra, 8b.
[67] Horayoth, 13a.
[68] Ketuboth, 5, 6.

one whose services were needed by the many as, for example, the lecturer of the academy.[69] It is also recorded in the early writings of the period of the Tannaim that on a certain day when glad tidings reached the Jews that they were not to be restrained any more by the Imperial Government from the study of the Law, that date was decreed to be an annual holiday in which mourning was not permitted.[70]

Torah, moreover, was said to be the delight of God. Wherever two people sit and discuss the words of the Law, the Divine Presence abides between them.[71] Torah guards from all evil the one who studies it.[72] Rabbi Meir held that even the heathen who occupies himself with the study of the Law is equal before God to the High Priest.[73] The elders of the Law, it was maintained, escape the ill effects of senescence for the older they grow the more stable grows their understanding.[74] In fact the Rabbis taught that the Biblical verse, " it shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones," referred to the supposed supernatural curative qualities of Torah.[75]

It is also interesting to note how the love of Torah was expressed through endearing epithets. Torah was likened unto water without which a person cannot exist. It was also called a " Tree of Life." It was further called " great spoil," on account of the Psalmist's expression, " I rejoice at Thy word as one that findeth great spoil." It was also likened unto the sun that constantly sheds light and warmth to the world. In fact, the Rabbis maintained, the Torah was comparable to the totality of all good things in life, for the Deuteronomic words, " in want of *all things*," actually referred to the lack of the study of the

[69] Moed Katan, 21a.

[70] Megillat Taanit, chapter 12. Regarding the historical setting of the event, see S. Zeitlin's " Megillat Taanit and Jewish History," pp. 79-80.

[71] Aboth, 3, 2.

[72] The last Mishnah of Kiddushin.

[73] Sanhedrin, 59a.

[74] Kinnim, 3, 6.

[75] Proverbs, 3, 8; Mekilta, Exodus, 15, 26.

Law.[76] Cheerfully and heroically did many Jews sacrifice their lives at different intervals during the Greek and Roman periods for the study of Torah. The Jews clung tenaciously to the moral of Rabbi Akiba's famous fable of the fish and the fox.[77] To leave the water, as the fox counselled, meant certain death to the fish. If it stayed in the water, as its own instincts dictated, it might eventually escape its enemies. Such was the fate of the Jews. If they ceased the study of the Torah, they would lose their identity; they would surely die. If they disobeyed Rome, they exposed themselves to its maximum penalty, tortures and death of the body. Unlike spiritual death, this infliction was not certain; there might be a chance for escape. To choose Torah was, therefore, the wiser course to which most Jews subscribed. Jewish education proved to be the salvation of the Jewish people.

[76] Mekilta, Exodus, 17, 8; 15, 25; 20, 15; 19, 1; Sotah, 21a.
[77] Berakoth, 61b.

Chapter III

EVOLUTION OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Educational Setting of the Time
The Development of the School System
The Growth of the Colleges

Chapter III

EVOLUTION OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Educational Setting of the Time

The historical periods with which we have been dealing have been classified as those of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. This is too broad a classification for tracing details of the educational developments of these periods. In the first place, there is an overlapping of sixty years. The Second Commonwealth came to an end in the year 70 C. E., while the period of the Tannaim is generally reckoned from the disciples of Hillel and Shammai—the year 10 C. E. Secondly, the period of the Second Commonwealth is too large a unit for detailed historical treatment. The following division, convenient for the specific purposes of this chapter, is therefore adopted.

These periods may be divided, educationally, into three parts: the periods of the Soferim, the Zugot, and the Tannaim. The first period may be said to begin with the construction of the Second Temple about 515 B. C. E. and to end about 200 B. C. E. It is in this period that we find the obscure institution known as the Great Assembly. The Jewish leaders of this time were called Soferim, scribes. This appellation is found several times in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Of Ezra it is written that " he was a ready scribe in the Law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given." [1] This name was used to connote those men engaged in writing or copying the Law and in teaching and interpreting it to the people. Another interesting explanation is found in the Talmud. The Hebrew word, *sofer*, may also mean " one who counts." The Talmud hence maintains that these men were called Soferim because they were so devoted to their task that they ac-

[1] Ezra, 7, 6. The traditional view presented in the text regarding the Soferim still is the most acceptable one.

tually counted the words and the letters of the Pentateuch, classified its contents, and recounted the number of laws, Sinaitic or Rabbinic, that pertained to each subject.[2]

The next two periods were approximately of equal duration. The period of the Zugot began about 200 B. C. E. and came to an end in 10 C. E. when the period of the Tannaim began. This third period is generally considered to have come to a close in the year 220 C. E. Thus, each of these two latter periods lasted about two centuries and a decade.

The term, Zugot, means "pairs." The second period is so called because during that time the Sanhedrin seems to have been headed by a duumvirate of distinguished rank and importance. According to later terminology one would be the *nasi* or president, and the other the *ab bet din*, the father of the court or the vice-president. During this period there were five such pairs beginning with Jose b. Joezer and Jose b. Johanan and ending with Hillel and Shammai.[3]

With the beginning of the period of the Tannaim the titles Rabbi (my master) for the ordained teachers and Rabban (our master) for the president of the Sanhedrin came into common usage. These titles are prefixed to the proper names of the spiritual masters of this period whenever their sayings are recorded in the ancient literature of the Jews. The term, Tanna, for a teacher of the oral law, does not appear in Tannaitic literature. It originated in the succeeding period when the term was applied to the teacher whose opinions were mentioned in the Mishnah or Baraita. (This latter Aramaic word is used to designate generally all the Tannaitic teachings not incorporated in the Mishnah.)

Each of these three periods made a distinct contribution in the evolution of the school system.

[2] Kiddushin, 30a; J. T. Shekalim, 5, 1. The term, Soferim, in the late Tannaitic period is used for both the masters of the Law and the teachers of the primary schools as in Sotah, 15a, תניא אמר להן ר"ג לחכמים and in Tosef. Megillah, 3, 19, והסופר מלמד סופרים הניחו לי ואדרשנה, כדרכו.

[3] Hagigah, 2, 2.

The Development of the School System

It is the thesis of the present writer that the development of the Jewish school system went through three stages: first, the founding of academies for higher learning, later, establishing secondary schools for adolescents, and, lastly, providing universal elementary schools. These educational stages are attributed respectively to the Men of the Great Assembly, Simon b. Shetah, and Joshua b. Gamala.

The following partial evidence is offered in support of this thesis: an important early statement quoted in the Talmud mentions, but vaguely to be sure, three such educational stages. In order to clarify this point, the quotation is divided into three paragraphs, and the specific words dealing with each level are italicized. Additional evidence is offered in the discussion.

"Verily let this man be remembered for good, and Joshua b. Gamala is his name, for had he not been, Torah would have been forgotten in Israel. At first everyone that had a father was taught Torah, but he that had no father did not learn the Torah . . . So *they ordained that teachers for children should be set up in Jerusalem.* Whence did they deduce this idea? From 'For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' [4]

"But this measure sufficed not, for he that had a father was brought by him there to be taught, but he that had no father did not go there. In consequence of this, *they ordained that teachers should be set up in every district, to whom children should be sent at the age of sixteen or seventeen years.*

"Still when a teacher became angry with a pupil, the latter rebelled and walked away. In this condition education remained until the time of Joshua b. Gamala, *who ordained that in every province and in every town teachers should be set up to whom children should be brought at the age of six or seven years."* [5]

[4] Isaiah, 2, 3.

[5] Baba Batra, 21a. This statement, very likely the most important historical document for Jewish educational research, is here given also in the original. דאמר רב יהודה אמר רב ברם זכור אותו האיש לטוב ויהושע בן גמלא שמו שאלמלא הוא נשתכחה תורה מישראל שבתחלה מי שיש לו אב מלמדו תורה מי שאין לו אב לא היה למד תורה מאי

In the quotation we find distinct reference to three new educational measures, the last of which is definitely said to have been decreed by Joshua b. Gamala, who was High Priest about the last days of the Second Temple. When, however, were the first two ordinances adopted? What, furthermore, did each innovation exactly contribute to the educational system?

In exploring the ancient Jewish literature with reference to the history of the Second Commonwealth prior to Joshua b. Gamala, we find mention of two significant educational decrees which are attributed respectively to the Men of the Great Assembly and to Simon b. Shetah. In the absence of any opposing evidence, it is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the first educational measure mentioned in the preceding quotation refers to the contribution of the Great Assembly in the period of the Soferim, while the second educational ordinance is that of Simon b. Shetah, who flourished in the first half of the second century of the period of the Zugot.

What, however, was the exact nature of each of the three educational contributions? It is quite evident from the previous quotation that the second innovation was the establishment of high schools for youths of sixteen or seventeen years of age, while the last decree refers to the establishment of elementary schools for young children. What educational reform was to be accomplished by the first regulation? The author believes that it was the founding of schools for higher learning in Jerusalem. The fact that the Talmudic quotation speaks, in that connection, of "teachers for children" does not refute this thesis, for that phrase is often used in the Talmud for school teachers generally in contradistinction to employers of ap-

דרוש ולמדתם אותם ולמדתם אתם התקינו שיהיו מושיבין מלמדי תינוקות בירושלים מאי דרוש כי מציון תצא תורה ועדיין מי שיש לו אב היה מעלה ומלמדו מי שאין לו אב לא היה עולה ולמד התקינו שיהו מושיבין בכל פלך ופלך ומכניסין אותן כבן ט"ז כבן י"ז ומי שהיה רבו כועס עליו מבעיט בו ויצא עד שבא יהושע בן גמלא ותיקן שיהו מושיבין מלמדי תינוקות בכל מדינה ומדינה ובכל עיר ועיר ומכניסים אותן כבן שש כבן שבע.

prentices. Furthermore, the Talmudic word, *tinokot*, children, is used also for " lads " or " youths." [6] So in this case, the translation of the Talmudic phrase may be " teachers for youths."

But what positive evidence sustains this interpretation? The fact that the first decree established schools only in Jerusalem indicates that these schools were intended primarily as centers of higher eduction. The great masters of the Law, the priests, the heads and the members of the highest tribunal in Israel were located then in the holy city of Jerusalem, hence colleges could be conveniently founded there. Furthermore, the fact that the Talmud declares that this decree was motivated by the idealistic prophecy of Isaiah, " For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," seems to indicate that the newly established schools were devoted to more than mere elementary or secondary education.

Additional evidence may be secured from the following Mishnah that mentions an educational decree among the three ordinances of the Men of the Great Assembly: " They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence around the Law." [7] A critical study of this quotation seems to point to the fact that the first and third ordinances were addressed to the spiritual leaders who sat in the tribunals of Israel and who had the authority for passing judgment and creating new laws for guarding and preserving the Torah. It seems quite reasonable to assume that the second decree was also addressed to the same people. The Great Assembly's educational ordinance meant, therefore, that every spiritual leader of Israel should endeavor to secure a large number of students to whom he would give advanced instruction of the Law, thus leading to the founding of colleges for higher learning.

Prior to the Second Commonwealth teaching was a

[6] See e. g. Gittin, 58a, שהתינוקות נתעללו בה בדרך and Yoma 23a, ת"ר מעשה בשני כהנים שהיו שניהן שוין ורצין ועולין בכבש . . . בא אביו של תינוק . . .

[7] Aboth, 1, 1.

parental concern except for the specialized training schools of the priests and of the prophets. This system was fairly successful because being chiefly an agrarian people during the days of the First Temple and since agriculture is a seasonal occupation, the Jews had sufficient time to advance their own education and to instruct their youth. With the rise, however, of the arts and industries in Palestine after the Babylonian Captivity, many of the people had to work all year round for their livelihood and so found little time for training their young. Higher education especially suffered. The adults had hardly any time to continue their own education, and the children, therefore, received very little instruction, merely the rudiments of Jewish education, thus precluding higher education. The decree of the Great Assembly aimed to safeguard higher learning by getting the great masters of the Law to establish schools in which they might give discourses and instruction to the many instead of devoting their talents solely to a few individuals. As for elementary and secondary education, important as these were, it was felt that the fathers, even if their time was limited, could still continue to teach the elements to their sons. Torah would thus be preserved in its entirety.

This educational reform of the Great Assembly established, for the first time in the history of Israel, schools catering to many students. A forerunner of these was the school said to have been founded earlier in Babylon during the Captivity.[8] Ezra, Nehemiah, and quite a number of the other Men of the Great Assembly very likely received their education in this school. With the rise of the Jerusalem schools, the Babylonian institution took a subordinate position. Hence in a later century we find Hillel coming to Jerusalem from Babylon in order to continue his education at the school of Shemaiah and Abtalion.[9]

Before the Jerusalem schools were established it had been customary for the great masters of the Law of every

[8] Yavetz, III., p. 68.

[9] J. T. Pesaḥim, 6, 1, על שלשה דברים עלה הלל מבבל.

generation to select an unusually gifted student, unless their own sons were such, upon whom they concentrated all their scholarly efforts. To this disciple they "handed down" the Torah in its entirety. The chain of tradition and of higher learning was thus a selective process linked by deliberate planning. With the founding of the advanced schools, however, higher education was democratized to a certain extent and the learned leaders began to devote themselves not to one but to many disciples. Since all the students were not of the same relative ability, only a few were able to learn and to master not only the whole tradition but also all that was newly expounded. Those who were so successful were said to have "received" the Law from their masters, and later became their successors in the academies.[10]

Some Jewish commentators advance another very interesting explanation for the educational ordinance of the Men of the Great Assembly. They point out that the selective process of higher education was successful so long as there was prophecy in Israel. With that special faculty there could be no fear that the master would make an erroneous choice. When, however, the Men of the Great Assembly saw prophecy on the decline, they began really to fear the cessation of higher learning among the Jews. If the one selected student did not fulfill the master's expectation as far as mental capacities were concerned, or if he should die young, before he had a chance to "hand down" the traditions, the accumulated learning of the past would be lost. For this reason, perhaps, the Men of the Great Assembly found it necessary to make higher education available to the many.[11]

When these higher schools were actually founded is still a matter of conjecture. It seems reasonable to assume that

[10] See the first chapter of Aboth. In reference to the chain of tradition from Moses to the Men of the Great Assembly, the term, מסר, handed down, is used. Afterward, the expression used is קבל, received. The change of idiom in this historical Mishnah is no mere accident. With the explanation given in the text, these phrases are indeed meaningful.

[11] See יין לבנון on the first Mishnah of Aboth.

the decree was first put into effect by Ezra during the latter half of the first century of the Soferim, for the Bible records of him that " Ezra had set his heart to expound the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances." [12]

The actual school system departed in practice from the theoretical intention. At first several higher schools or colleges actually were established, but at the close of the period of the Soferim they merged into one. All the students eligible for higher education desired to attend the lectures of the outstanding master of the day, and so they sought admission into his school. Furthermore, the entire student body seeking higher learning could easily be accommodated in one building. Consequently, in due time one large higher school was established at Jerusalem under the leadership of a president and vice-president. Very likely this dual leadership was the result of the merging of two smaller colleges each having its own head, but there are no historical data to establish this point. This college continued without change till the last " pair " of the Zugot, when it again became divided into two schools, Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai.

How many students usually attended the lectures of this academy for higher learning? No direct answer can be found in the historical documents. We may safely infer, however, from several known facts that there were several hundred of these students. Many of the Priests and Levites received their higher education in this college. So, too, from this college came the elders who sat in the highest tribunal of Israel, the Sanhedrin, consisting of seventy-one sages, as well as the judges of the lesser courts comprising twenty-three men. Several of such tribunals existed throughout the land of Palestine.

Although this college, like most of its predecessors, provided instruction for several hundred students, the educational system did not prove entirely satisfactory, nor did it live up to expectations. Instead of the thousands of stu-

[12] Ezra, 7, 10.

dents who were expected to flock into Jerusalem desiring admission, only hundreds came. This disappointment may be attributed to three causes: first, the colleges were located only in Jerusalem and so were inconvenient for those who resided elsewhere in Palestine; second, the entrance requirements were too high; and finally, many students could not meet the financial expenditure involved in attending the colleges.

The assumption of the Great Assembly that children would receive a complete elementary and secondary education from the hands of their parents did not work out in practice. Orphaned children were entirely deprived of an education. Similarly, many children whose fathers were living would also be neglected because the parents were too preoccupied in their daily work earning a livelihood, or because the fathers themselves might not be conversant with the elements of Jewish learning. In addition, since the students had to take care of their living expenses while in Jerusalem and also since the colleges charged an admission fee, children of poor parents or orphans could not hope to gain admission into the colleges. The Talmudic statement, "he that had a father was brought by him there to be taught," refers to the father who was able to provide his son, firstly, with a complete preparatory education, and, secondly, with enough money to enable him to meet all expenses while attending the school of higher learning in Jerusalem.

With the Maccabean triumphs there came a revival of the Hebrew language and of Jewish studies and observances. Many youths now eagerly desired a good Jewish education which, in the past, had been denied them. They were not far enough advanced in their studies, nor did they possess enough money to gain admission to the Jerusalem college. Nor could they find preparatory schools in which to satisfy their thirst for Jewish knowledge. Hence the need for free secondary schools gradually arose, and in time these schools became estabilshed throughout Palestine.

Simon b. Shetah undertook to remedy and to reform the school system. The Jerusalem Talmud records that he decreed three new measures one of which was: " children should go to school." [13] This ordinance meant the establishment of high schools for young adults from the age of sixteen or seventeen years. Being the brother of Queen Salome and the vice-president of the Sanhedrin, Simon's decree presumably did not go unheeded, and secondary schools may have been established in all the large towns or districts of Palestine.

In about 75 B. C. E., for the first time in the history of the Jews, a " two level " school system came into existence. This consisted of the Jerusalem college for advanced students and the preparatory secondary schools which were spread throughout the lands in which Jews lived. Elementary education was still a matter of parental care.

These secondary schools provided free and compulsory education for all male adolescents. The compulsion aspect, however, was secured only through constant moral and religious persuasion. Only by this means were the parents induced to send their children to the schools. Orphaned boys were also prevailed upon to attend them regularly. If a student graduated from these schools, he was readily admitted into the Jerusalem college, providing, of course, he had the admission fee.

This new regulation created a problem at Jerusalem. The number of students at the college began to increase so rapidly that they could not be accommodated properly. Consequently, within approximately half a century after the founding of the high schools, another academy had to be established at Jerusalem with Shammai, formerly the vice-president of the college, as its head. Thus came into existence the two large and famous schools of Hillel and Shammai which were instrumental in developing and shaping Jewish Law for future generations.

The success of Simon b. Shetah's reform was brief. Some of the bad conditions that Simon had aimed to re-

[13] J. T. Ketuboth, chapter 8, end, ושיהו התינוקות הולכין לבית הספר

move had reappeared again, and threatened to disrupt the new educational system. It was not difficult to persuade parents to send their children to school as long as it released them of the religious obligation of teaching them. This, however, was not the case with adolescent orphans. Quite a number of them preferred to remain untutored. Furthermore, many children were deprived in their early youth of a complete elementary education either because they were orphans or on account of the negligence of their fathers. When these boys became of age, they were unable to meet the high school entrance requirements. This condition gradually brought about the lowering of standards in the secondary schools. In due time the Jerusalem colleges were similarly affected. The spiritual masters of Israel expressed their dislike of this lowering of standards in no uncertain terms.[14]

Another factor that militated to some extent against the school system was the abrupt change in the pupils' educational environment. The change, at the age of sixteen, from parental instruction to that of a formal school system found many of the newly admitted students entirely undisciplined in class decorum. The teachers could not handle such an emergency. "When a teacher became angry with a scholar, the latter rebelled and walked away." A new reform in the educational system was greatly needed. Some parents who did not have the time to teach their own children arranged to send them to a friend's house for instruction. This friend was paid for his services. There arose, from this custom, elementary teachers who took care of a number of young students. Thus there came into existence the phrase, *tinokot shel bet rabban*, "children of the house of the master" for school children. This situation existed, however, only in isolated instances. For one reason, it could apply only to parents of means. Consequently, it helped little the vexing problem. The man who lived up to the exigencies of the time

[14] Sotah, 47b, משרבו תלמידי שמאי והלל שלא שימשו כל צורכן רבו מחלוקות בישראל ונעשית תורה כשתי תורות.

was Joshua b. Gamala, the High Priest, of whom the Talmud says in praise, that if not for him, Torah would eventually have been forgotten in Israel.

Joshua b. Gamala saw that these problems could be solved effectively only by the establishment of free elementary schools for all boys. This reform he put into effect about the year 64 C. E. Through his ordinance such schools were founded in every town and in every province where Jews resided in large numbers. Parents were publicly notified and made to realize that the religious obligation of teaching their children Torah could be discharged properly only by sending their boys to these elementary schools where they would be given instruction daily by fully qualified and competent teachers. Those who refused to heed this advice were ostracized to a certain extent by the Jewish community which named them contemptuously *am haarez*,[15] "people of the country" or better "common, ignorant people." Elementary education was hence made general. It was available for all boys from the age of six or seven, without distinction of class or caste. This is the first instance in recorded history that we find an institution of universal and compulsory elementary education established. This completed the organization of the Jewish school system with its three distinct levels of education.

This newly completed system of education gained a permanent hold upon the Jews. It withstood the disasters of the destruction of the Temple and of the dissolution of the Jewish nation that came quickly in its wake. With the dispersion it spread to the lands of exile. At times it was suspended by the ruling power that was hostile to the Jewish religion, but invariably such action would be only temporary and the school system would quickly be restored to its former position. Not in vain does the Talmud give high praise to Joshua b. Gamala, for his

[15] See Berakoth 47b: ת"ר איזהו ע"ה . . . כל שיש לו בנים ואינו מגדלם לת"ת and Kiddushin, 41a: כל שאינו לא במקרא ולא במשנה ולא בדרך ארץ דור הנאה ממנו.

contribution not only solved effectively a grave crisis in the history of Jewish education but also introduced an important educational reform that persisted throughout future generations. It is well to note that the Jewish school system was developed during the Second Commonwealth and that each of the periods of the Soferim, Zugot, and Tannaim contributed materially toward its evolution. It is worthy of note, further, that the establishment first of colleges, then of secondary schools, and finally of primary schools seems to be the usual sequence in the evolution of a school system for a nation developing its own educational system from within instead of adopting or having a system imposed upon it from without.

It seems proper at this time to examine briefly a contrary theory advanced by Mr. Nathan Morris in his recent book, " The Jewish School," in which he takes issue with practically all writers of Jewish history who claim that compulsory and universal elementary education was instituted or completed by Joshua b. Gamala. Mr. Morris maintains that it was " by the fourth century C. E. the process of development had reached its completion with the elementary school for boys as a publicly organized and controlled institution." [16] Much of his argument, however, is based on assumption. Those Talmudic statements which do not fit his theory he dismisses as purely legendary or finds them faulty in some other respect. His main argument seems to be based on the following report of a discussion between two Rabbis in the third century C. E. which he quotes in full.

" When Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Hiyya had an argument, Rabbi Hanina said, ' How can you argue with me? If the Torah, God forbid, were forgotten in Israel, I would restore it by my dialectic powers.' Said Rabbi Hiyya, ' How can you argue with me? I am preventing the Torah from being forgotten in Israel. I go and plant flax and weave nets and catch gazelles. Their flesh I give to orphans for food; of the skins I make scrolls on which

[16] *The Jewish School,* p. 17. See also Chapter II. and Appendix I.

I write out the five books of Moses. Then I go up to a town where there are no teachers for children and teach five boys to read the five books, each one a different book. Similarly, I teach six boys the six volumes of the Mishnah, and I say to them that until I come back let every one of them teach to his fellow the reading of his book of the Pentateuch, or his volume of the Mishnah.' " [17] The author then concludes—perhaps with a bit of sarcasm—" such was the position in a community amongst whom we are told ' compulsory ' and ' universal ' education had been introduced some centuries before."

Apparently, the arguer, in his zeal, overlooked the words: " then I go up to a town where there are no teachers for children." Although elementary education had theoretically been made compulsory and universal for boys by the decree of Joshua b. Gamala, that did not preclude the possibility of certain villages being without facilities for education, especially in the days of the dispersion. Even in America, where education is generally conceded to be universal and compulsory, one might formerly have found some small village or town without school buildings or other facilities for educating the young. The claim by Rabbi Hiyya, " I am preventing the Torah from being forgotten in Israel " does not imply that Torah, at that time, was in a state of decline. Such an inference is ruled out by the obvious implication to the contrary of the statement of Rabbi Hanina, " If the Torah, God forbid, were forgotten in Israel. . . . " All Rabbi Hiyya meant, it would seem, was that his task was of the nature of a " school builder " and would help assure the continuation of Torah in Israel.

Other Talmudic statements, quoted by Mr. Morris, of Rabbis living generations after Joshua b. Gamala, that emphasize the importance of " starting young," offer no additional proof. The Rabbis wished to see compulsory and universal education, that had been earlier decreed, now be practiced to the fullest extent. Likewise, when the

[17] Ketuboth, 103b.

Rabbis in the late Tannaitic period speak of a "father teaching his son," they do not necessarily mean it literally. The phrase is used because the precept of Jewish education has its origin in the Bible which always speaks of "teaching thy sons." [18]

The Growth of the Colleges

The evolution of the Jewish school system during the Second Commonwealth has already been traced. So, too, the causes contributing toward the rise of each kind of school have been discussed in detail. This treatment suffices for the secondary and elementary schools, because the organization of these schools did not undergo any significant change from the time of their inception till the end of the Tannaitic period other than what has already been presented or which will be given in the following chapter under the caption, "The Classes in Operation."

The colleges of higher education, however, went through additional evolutionary changes. In order that these important changes may be clearly set forth, they are treated separately.

When the Men of the Great Assembly resolved to establish colleges in Jerusalem, their idea was, it will be remembered, that every great scholar of the Law should gather about him many disciples and thus create his own academy of higher learning. However, one great college came into existence at Jerusalem and continued for several centuries till about the beginning of the common era when it stimulated the founding of the two rival schools of

[18] For a brief exposition of the views of other writers on this problem see Swift's "Education in Ancient Israel," pp. 91-95. One interesting statement that is wholly in agreement with the views of the author is here presented: "The universality of teachers in the first part of the first century C. E. and, by inference, of schools is shown by passages in the New Testament such as LUKE V. 17; 'There were Pharisees and doctors of the law, sitting by, who were come out of every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem.'" This quotation evidently refers to the instructors of the secondary schools that were, by that time, established in every district where Jews lived.

Hillel and Shammai. These famous colleges flourished till the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem in the year 70 C. E.

In this dark hour, a ray of hope broke through the heavy clouds overhanging the Jewish people. Johanan b. Zakkai, through clever maneuverings, gained the permission of Vespasian to reestablish the Jerusalem college at Jabneh (Jamnia).[19] This request came at that critical moment because the great scholar realized that the college was the fountainhead that nourished and maintained all Jewish life. Little, however, did Vespasian know that he was granting the Jews a lease on life by which they would outlive the glories of Rome. The schools of Hillel and Shammai were henceforth united in one academy under the leadership of Johanan b. Zakkai.

This centralization of higher education at Jabneh continued as long as the founder lived. At his death a number of his best disciples settled in other communities and gathered about them flocks of students to whom they gave advanced instruction of the Law, thus establishing colleges of their own. The uncertainties of the times rendered specially advisable the establishment of these colleges in various centers. If one school was banned or closed by a Roman general, Torah would be preserved and studied in the other schools. The fact, too, that Jabneh did not possess the traditional sanctity of Jerusalem made this innovation very feasible. Colleges of almost equal rank in scholarship were founded in Palestine, Babylonia, and Rome. Since, however, the curriculum and the methods of teaching varied to some extent within the different academies, some students made it a practice to visit more than one college.[20] Lydda, Bekiin, Bene Berak, Siknin, Usha, and Sepphoris were some of the more famous college centers other than Jabneh. So, early in the days of the Roman exile, the ideal system of the Men of the Great

[19] Gittin, 56a and b.

[20] Sanhedrin, 32b. See also Yavetz, VI., p. 153 and the notes.

Assembly, proposed half a millennium earlier, was finally put into practice and continued long beyond the Tannaitic period.

Another sign of evolutionary growth in the colleges is the matter of the admission fee. While the secondary and elementary schools seem to have been established and continued as free institutions, such was not the case with the colleges. The history of the change cannot with certainty be traced completely, since the data concerning this subject are very sparse. We do know definitely, however, that in the college of Shemaiah and Abtalion, about the middle of the first century before the common era, there was a daily admission fee exacted of each student. We are told, for example, that one day when Hillel, as a student, did not possess the required fee, he was not admitted into that college.[21] In the absence of opposing evidence it seems reasonable to assume that this practice was no innovation with these masters but was introduced when the schools were founded as a source of revenue as necessary for the maintenance of the buildings. The only exception to this rule was probably the free admittance of the Priests and Levites, who were also provided with means through the special gifts ordained for them by the Jewish Law. Since their services were required in the Temple and they could not earn enough to pay the fee, and since they needed the higher education for their duties in the Temple, these men were permitted free entrance in the college.

That the admission fee was a usual requirement in the ancient colleges is further supported by the conflict between the schools of Hillel and Shammai in regard to the restrictions to be placed on higher education. The school of Shammai, always eager to continue intact the old traditions, favored the wealthy students and held that material wealth should be one of the four criteria to be applied in the selection of students for the colleges.[22] They,

[21] See second chapter, "The Importance of Jewish Education."

[22] These are discussed in the second chapter under the heading, "Educational Ideals and Goals."

therefore, continued the old practice of charging admission fee on the ground that, besides providing the necessary revenue, it served as a basis of selection for admission. The school of Hillel, on the other hand, familiar with the difficulties their leader in his youth had to overcome in order to hear the lectures of Shemaiah and Abtalion, were of the contrary opinion. To them, wealth was not a proper criterion for admission, and so they were desirous of instituting a change.

It is, furthermore, interesting to note that this controversy did not long remain merely theoretical, but became actual policies of the respective schools. This statement is based upon an old tradition that has come down through the ages, namely, that the students of Hillel were more numerous than those of Shammai, while the latter were more sagacious than the former,[23] consequences that might be expected of such differing policies. It may be asserted with fair certainty, then, that the school of Shammai continued the traditional policy of exacting daily admission fees from its students, while that of Hillel, for the first time in the history of the Jewish colleges, established free higher education.

These differing policies were rigidly adhered to as long as the schools of Hillel and Shammai remained as two separate institutions in Jerusalem. When the schools merged into one at Jabneh under the leadership of Johanan b. Zakkai, a compromise was adopted. No admission fee was collected any longer, but other restrictions still made admittance highly selective. No person could enter the college whose sincerity was held in doubt. A porter was still retained at the door of the schoolhouse to prevent the entrance of those who had not received certification from the head of the college. When the Patriarch Gamaliel, who succeeded Johanan, was deposed from office by the revolt of his colleagues and students, the porter was also removed from the door of the school,

[23] See Tosafot, Yebamoth, 14a.

and students gained unobstructed admission. The Talmud records that on the day this change took place several hundred additional benches had to be placed in the college for the new students.[24] Arbitrary restrictions on admission were never revived, and candidates gained entrance on scholarship alone. The liberal policy of the school of Hillel prevailed.

[24] Berakoth, 28a. See also Graetz, II., p. 338; Yavetz, VI., p. 56.

Chapter IV

ADMINISTRATION

The School Buildings and the Classes
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Chapter IV

ADMINISTRATION

The School Buildings and the Classes

The earliest school building in the history of the Second Commonwealth of which mention is made in the ancient writings was constructed not later than the end of the period of the Soferim as the centralized college of higher learning at Jerusalem. This building, known as the *bet hamidrash*, the house of study, was built on the Temple mount, so that not only the members of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish judiciary tribunal, but also the Priests and the Levites could conveniently attend and participate in the discussions and polemics of the college. This they did especially on the Sabbaths and holidays,[1] since on those days the courts were not in session and the sacrificial service at the temple was considerably curtailed.

Another reason for the adjacency of the academy to the Temple may have been the desire for bringing into closer relationship the theoretical teachings of the school and the practical exercises thereof in the services of the Temple and in the administration of justice by the Sanhedrin, which was located in one of the halls of the Temple. Some ancient commentaries [2] advance still another reason from the Tannaitic sources. They claim that in the olden days it was felt that the sacred ceremonials and service of the Temple would have a psychological effect upon the students influencing them to become God-fearing as well as more industrious in the pursuit of their studies.

This school building consisted chiefly of one main auditorium that was large enough to accommodate all the students. Even from the meagre evidence that is available,

[1] Tosef. Sanhedrin, 7, 1, א"ר יוסי בראשונה לא היה מחלוקת בישראל ב"ד של שבעים ואחד שהיו בלשכת הגזית . . . בשבתות וימים טובים לא היו נכנסין אלא לבית המדרש שבהר הבית . . . See also Sukkah, 53a.

[2] Tosafot, Baba Batra, 21a, ד"ה כי מציון

it seems obvious that there were no separate classrooms in the building. The entire school formed one class under the leadership of the *nasi* and the *ab bet din* of the Sanhedrin. All students were expected to attend their lectures of instruction and then to participate in a general discussion. The *nasi* or president devoted most of his time to the college, while the *ab bet din*, the father of the court or vice-president, as the Hebrew name of his office indicates, attended primarily to the duties of the Sanhedrin.

The school building had no seats. It differed from the Peripatetic school of Aristotle in which both students and master walked around, and also from modern schools in which usually the class is seated and the teacher stands. The students of the ancient Jewish schools always pursued their studies standing. When a lecture was being delivered, they flocked about their master, who also stood, and listened with awe and reverence to his discourse of the Torah.[3] This fact affords new significance to the statement of the Men of the Great Assembly, "Raise up many disciples." The expression "Raise up" may now be interpreted to mean "increase the number" as well as "cause to stand up." The old custom of standing proved a hardship on many students and was abolished with the death of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, about the first half of the first century of the common era. The institution of benches at the college was, nevertheless, deprecated by many scholars who declared that "when Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the Law ceased." This expression, "the glory of the Law," in reference to the custom of standing shows the importance attached to it by the Rabbis. These masters taught that whenever one learns Torah he should think that God was bestowing upon him the knowledge of His Law. Consequently, whenever a Jew pursues the study of Torah he should stand as did his forefathers at the foot of Mount Sinai when God first revealed the Torah.

[3] See Megillah, 21a, תנא מה שאין כן בתורה . . . ת"ר מימות משה . . . ועד רבן גמליאל לא היו למדין תורה אלא מעומד . . . Maimonides holds, however, that the master used to sit while delivering the lecture; see הלכות ת"ת, פ"ד, ה"ב, ולחם משנה שם.

When the seats were finally permitted, they were arranged in the same manner as were those of the Sanhedrin. Each row of benches formed a semicircle with the lecturer seated in the center. This arrangement afforded the students a full view of their master as well as of many of their comrades who participated in the discussions. The Jewish Sages always insisted that the students see the face of their master during the lecture. The first few rows were generally reserved for members of the Sanhedrin, the Priests and Levites who occasionally attended the college.

Even before the destruction of the Second Temple, the functions of the Sanhedrin were somewhat curtailed by the authority of the Roman procurator. After the Temple was destroyed by Titus, the Sanhedrin and the colleges of Jerusalem were amalgamated into one assemblage, the new college at Jabneh. However, instead of having one group of seventy elders, a lesser Sanhedrin of twenty-three Sages were selected. These were seated in one semicircle. In front of them were three rows consisting also of twenty-three seats each for the advanced or ordained students of the college. Each of these had been assigned a special seat. In the event that the members of the lesser Sanhedrin were equally divided on a decision of law, their number would be augmented from the advanced students at times even up to seventy-one, the maximum number of the Sanhedrin. Other students in the college were seated in similar rows back of the lesser Sanhedrin. Freshmen were required to sit on the ground, as was the custom of the common people at that time. This custom is still practiced in many Oriental countries. Unlike the days of the Second Commonwealth wherein the Presidency of the Sanhedrin was to a certain extent an office in name only, since the High Priest presided at all important cases, the President of the college at Jabneh was the officially recognized Patriarch. When the college was fully occupied, the rows of students gave it the appearance of a vineyard with rows of plants, therefore the colleges of the Tannaitic period were often called "vineyards" in the

spoken Hebrew and Aramaic languages. The Mishnah, for example, says: "Rabbi Eleazar b. Azariah thus expounded it before the Sages in the vineyard at Jabneh." [4] This name was used, especially, to distinguish the academies of higher learning from the high schools which were called *bet hamidrash.*

When the secondary schools were instituted by Simon b. Shetah, proper accommodations for all the new schools had to be found at once. Fortunately, many synagogues had been established throughout Palestine as houses of worship. Since services were conducted only in the early mornings and in the late afternoons and evenings, the synagogues were unoccupied practically the entire day. They were therefore quickly utilized for housing the new high schools. The synagogue that was formerly known only as *bet hakeneset,* the house of assembly, became now known also as *bet hamidrash,* a house of study. As the ancient writings seem to indicate and has also been verified by modern archeological excavations, the synagogues in those days usually consisted of either two adjoining rooms or of a main auditorium and gallery,[5] one for the men and the other for the women; therefore, two classes could be quite conveniently housed in any one synagogue. This arrangement proved completely satisfactory, and no special buildings were constructed at that time for the new project.

Later when the elementary schools were established, the problem of accommodation was similarly solved. There were still numerous synagogues that were not used for school purposes in all the large towns of both Palestine and the other lands where Jews resided in large numbers. These synagogues were required by the decree of Joshua b. Gamala to be converted during daytime into schoolhouses for the youngsters. From that time on "synagogue" became synonymous with "school" whenever reference was

[4] Ketuboth, 4, 6; Sanhedrin, 4, 3 and 4, Rashi; Menahoth, 82b. See also Schürer's chapter on "Sanhedrim."

[5] See the Hebrew Encyclopedia "Ozar Israel," *bet hakeneset,* for the ancient and modern sources.

made to the buildings.[6] A modern writer explains the fact that the word "school" is hardly mentioned in the New Testament as follows: "The school was so intimately associated with the synagogue that in ordinary speech the two were not distinguished."[7] In time the name, *hazzan*, for the synagogue official came to denote also a primary school teacher.[8]

There were, moreover, quite a number of synagogues that provided space under their roofs for both the elementary and secondary classes. Ancient sources clearly indicate that the different groups were never confused. The synagogues, therefore, housing the schools very likely had extension rooms constructed especially to prevent this. The Jerusalem Talmud, for example, records: "There were four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem and each had its own *bet sefer* and its own *bet Talmud*, *bet sefer* for *Mikra* (elementary education) and *bet Talmud* for *Mishnah* (secondary education)."[9] Although the number may be exaggerated, this statement, as well as similar ones found elsewhere in ancient Jewish sources, support the above conclusion.

After the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in the year 70 C. E. and again after the defeat of Bar Kokba in 135 C. E. when hundreds of synagogues were completely destroyed by the Romans, there was a shortage of schoolhouses. The synagogues that had been newly constructed in the old cities which began to be reinhabited by the Jews, and those in the new centers which the Jews began to settle were reserved chiefly for the high schools. Special buildings were therefore constructed for elementary schools. Such a school was called *bet sefer*, the house of the book,

[6] See e. g. Hagigah, 15a, ת"ר מעשה באחר . . . תקפיה עיליה לבי מדרשא א"ל לינוקא פסוק לי פסוקך . . . עיליה לבי כנשתא אחריתי א"ל לינוקא פסוק לי פסוקך . . .

[7] G. H. B. in Cheyne's "Dict. of the Bible," art. Educ.

[8] This, no doubt, is the simplest explanation of the Mishnaic text, Sabbath, 1, 3. See also Sotah, 49a, וספריא כחזניא. For other interpretations see Morris' *The Jewish School*, pp. 236-7.

[9] J. T. Megillah, 3, 1. Compare Ketuboth, 105a. See also "Ozar Israel," *bet sefer*.

and its teachers were known as *soferim*, scribes. The high school was named *bet Talmud*, the house of learning or of study. *Bet hamidrash* became a general term for "school."

It is interesting to note further that a number of teachers during the Tannaitic period had a custom, similar to that of some of the Greek philosophers, of conducting their classes outdoors. A reason for this practice seems to have been that the buildings were very warm during the summer. However Rabbi Judah, the author of the Mishnah, forbade the practice, basing his objection on a Biblical verse.[10] The Talmud records elsewhere that once when Rabbi Judah found the school overcrowded he taught the students in the field.[11] His prohibition, therefore, seems to have been restricted only against teaching Torah in the streets.

An important fact in this history of Jewish education is that instruction was generally given to all the classes from morning till evening. From a rather lengthy story related in the Talmud,[12] it is evident that no lunch hour was provided for the children. That the children abstained from food the entire day at school is also suggested by a question raised in a later generation whether the schoolhouse need be searched at all for bread crumbs and the like before the Passover holiday.[13] Abstaining from food was no unusual hardship for the school children, since the people generally in those days were accustomed to having only two meals a day, one in the morning and the other in the evening. Because of this arrangement, however, children did not enter school until the age of six or seven years receiving instruction at home from their parents for a year or two.[14] The childen were excused from attending classes on Friday afternoons and before holidays [15] in order

[10] Moed Katan, 16a and b.
[11] Sabbath, 127a.
[12] Taanith, 23b.
[13] J. T. Pesahim, 1, 1.
[14] Compare Aboth, 5, 21, בן חמש שנים למקרא with Baba Batra, 21a, ומכניסים אותן כבן שש וכבן שבע.
[15] See באר הגולה on Yoreh Deah, 245, 12, where he deduces the above from Tannaitic sources.

to allow them time to prepare for the Sabbath or for the holiday. Short sessions were held on Sabbath evenings and afternoons [16] chiefly for the purpose of a general review, but also to afford parents an opportunity to visit the schools and hear their sons recite the lessons.

The colleges were an exception to the above rule. Their students had two regular daily sessions, one during the day and the other in the evening. These sessions were not omitted even on holidays [17] although, perhaps, they were somewhat shortened. Generally the lecture was delivered in the afternoon. When the attendance at the college of Jabneh had increased greatly, in order to meet the needs of the many students who had to work for a livelihood during the day, the lectures were given in the evenings.[18] All other time at the college was devoted to review and to general discussion.

Reliable evidence regarding the size of the classes of the elementary and secondary schools in the Tannaitic period is not available.[19] A Talmudic statement, however, offers us a clue. This statement is to the effect that if in a community the children find the journey to their school hazardous or difficult and if there are twenty-five children suffering from such conditions, the members of the community can force one another to hire a teacher and establish a classroom in their own vicinity.[20] The Talmud prefaces this statement with the explanation that the law had been in force since the decree of Joshua b. Gamala. The purpose of this law, judged from the entire context, seems to be that twenty-five children were enough to form a class

[16] Nedarim, 37a; Sabbath, 1, 3.

[17] Betzah, 21a; Sukkah, 53a.

[18] That in the earlier days the lectures were delivered in the afternoons is evident from Sukkah, 53a, and Yoma, 35b. That in the later days a change was instituted may be inferred from Pesahim, 72b and Betzah, 21a. It is interesting to note, furthermore, that in some colleges lectures were delivered even on Friday afternoons. Such seems to have been the case in the college of Shemaiah and Abtalion (see Yoma, 35b), and in the school of Rabbi Akiba (see Pesahim, 109a).

[19] The number of students attending the colleges is discussed in the preceding chapter.

[20] Baba Batra, 21a, and Tosafot.

and it should be the concern of the community to provide a teacher. We may, therefore, with reason assume that the classes in the Tannaitic period consisted of twenty-five to forty-nine children, for if there were fifty boys, two classes would be formed. It is interesting to note that the Talmud explicitly so limits the size of classes. The restriction on size applied, however, only to elementary classes. From other ancient sources it is evident that the secondary classes were considerably larger in size and not so uniform.[21] For this reason it was convenient to conduct the secondary schools in the synagogues throughout the Tannaitic period.

How many children were actually successful in gaining a secondary education in the Tannaitic period? The following may supply the answer. The Mishnah, explains the Gemara, permits a body of three laymen to decide certain cases concerning money matters, because it was considered an impossibility to find from among the three one who would not have learned the law accurately and unable to enlighten his comrades.[22] This may be interpreted to mean that at least one-third of the male adult population of the Jews at that time received a fairly complete education in the secondary schools. If this interpretation be correct, it might explain the following quotation from Philo: "Since the Jews esteem their laws as divine revelations, and are instructed in the knowledge of them from their earliest youth, they bear the image of the law in their souls." [22a]

The Support and Maintenance of the Schools

The money necessary for the support and maintenance of the school system was derived from taxation and con-

[21] This explains in part the tradition quoted in Gittin, 58a, וכל אחד ואחד היו לפניו ארבע מאות תינוקות של בית רבן.

[22] Sanhedrin, 2a and 3a. That this proportion did not hold true several centuries later is evident from the familiar saying in Rabbah, Leviticus, 2, אלף בני אדם נכנסין למקרא יוצא מהן מאה. מאה למשנה יוצאין מהן עשרה. עשרה לתלמוד יוצא מהן אחד.

[22a] Legat. ad Cajum, 31.

tribution. Each community taxed only the financially able members and perhaps only those whose children attended the schools.[23] This was an integral part of the decrees of Simon b. Shetah and of Joshua b. Gamala, without which their reforms could not have lasted. The only exception were the colleges.

During the Second Commonwealth the money necessary for the maintenance of the colleges came chiefly from direct tuition fees. After the destruction of the Temple when the college, amalgamated with the Sanhedrin, was reestablished at Jabneh and free tuition was instituted; special messengers were sent periodically by the Patriarch, the head of the college, to all the Jewish settlements to collect contributions. As the Jews had been accustomed to contribute annually for the upkeep of the Temple and the daily sacrifices at Jerusalem, they were willing to turn over their *Shekalim* to the college. Later when several additional colleges were founded, the heads of those academies continued the practice, and at times even took trips themselves to raise funds for the maintenance of their schools.[24]

The financing of the school system was not a burdensome matter for the people. The salaries of the teachers were the chief expense. The next item of expense was the maintenance of the school buildings. All the secondary and most of the elementary schools were not included in the latter category, since they were housed in the synagogues that were always kept in good condition by the community. The colleges and the special elementary school buildings represented the only additional burden as far as maintenance was concerned.

Even the teachers' salaries did not present a great problem. In the first place the teachers who could afford it, taught without pay. They cheerfully fulfilled the precept of the Law that required them to teach without thought of material rewards. Secondly, the salaries were in every

[23] See above note 20 and the text.

[24] For a detailed discussion of this matter, see Rabbi Leopold Greenwald's book, ארץ ישראל, בבל, וארצות הגולה the first chapter.

case very low. No teacher was permitted by the Law to make his profession " a spade wherewith to dig " [25] and to accept more pay than he was actually able to earn at some other work during the hours he devoted to teaching.[26] Teachers were thus compensated only for their loss of time. Since all the people agreed that the teachers were entitled to at least that much, no difficulties were encountered in collecting the taxes. The fact that the finances necessary for the schools were relatively insignificant played an important rôle in the survival of the Jewish school system in spite of the many persecutions and interferences from the outside.

The Supervisors and Administrators

The supervision and administration of the schools during the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim was always the responsibility of the Sanhedrin or of the lesser courts. It has been pointed out before that the president of the Sanhedrin was also the head of the main college even when the two were separate and distinct. As president he was the chief lecturer, supervisor, and administrator.

All the other schools, however, were under the supervision and administration of the local Jewish courts, *bet din.* These consisted usually of three judges who were ordained rabbis or learned laymen. Every fairly large synagogue had also its own secondary and elementary school as well as its own court which was charged with the supervision and administration of the schools. The Babylonian Talmud records that Jerusalem had nearly four hundred such educational systems before Titus destroyed it.[27] If this number is not exaggerated and if we reckon a minimum average of one hundred children to a system, Jerusalem had at that time between thirty and forty thousand children attending school. This estimate is conser-

[25] Aboth, 4, 5.
[26] J. T. Nedarim, 4, 3. See also Bekhoroth, 29a.
[27] Ketuboth, 105a.

vative as compared with the historical accounts of Josephus and Tacitus; the general Jewish population of Jerusalem according to them seems to have been at least ten times as much. Archaeologists, however, claim that the entire population of Jerusalem c. 40 C. E. could hardly have been over 50,000; therefore, all the previous figures of the Talmud, as well as those of Josephus, and Tacitus are considered to be highly exaggerated.

The judges of the large synagogues, who devoted all their time to the triple task of attending to the duties of the court, to the supervision and to the administration of the schools, received their salaries from the community in a manner similar to that of the teachers. The judges of the smaller synagogues whose duties were not so absorbing contributed their services gratis and derived their livelihood from other callings. There were certain courts in Jerusalem, however, that were charged with additional duties and these judges received their salaries from the Temple fund as did the teachers who taught the priests the special laws of the sacrifices.[28]

In their dual capacity of supervisor and administrator, the courts had the jurisdiction of appointing and discharging teachers, of setting up new classes, of collecting the school taxes, of determining the salaries of all paid officials, and other similar functions.

In the case of a grievance on the part of an individual or on the part of the community, the case could be brought for a decision to a higher court or even to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, whose ruling was final. There is no documentary evidence of any actual cases occurring during the periods of Jewish history here under consideration.

The Classes in Operation

So far, the organization of the schools in reference to the separate classes has not been determined. How many grades, for example, were there in each school? How long

[28] *Ibid.*, 105a and 106a.

was the school term for the average pupil? When did the schools have registration for new pupils? Were pupils admitted at all times?

The data on these topics are very meagre indeed. The author believes, however, that the classes of the secondary and elementary schools, unlike those of today wherein promotion is made yearly or semi-annually, were organized as two-year units and that the children were registered only at the beginning of the term. But what evidence warrants such a belief? A careful study of a Talmudic text yields this suggestion.

In describing the three decrees for the establishment of the Jewish school system, the Talmudic statement mentions " sixteen or seventeen years " and " six or seven years " as the ages for admittance in the secondary and elementary schools, respectively. What do these alternatives signify? The commentaries on the Talmud explain the latter alternative as follows: if a child was physically strong, he was admitted at the age of six; if he was weak, he was admitted at seven years.[29] These commentaries are surprisingly silent, however, about the preceding phrase, " sixteen or seventeen years." Their explanation is not adequate in this instance.

If we posit, however, the above hypothesis, the phraseology of the Talmud becomes clearer. When the secondary and elementary schools were organized, the age requirement for admission was theoretically set at sixteen and six years, respectively. Since the classes were organized on a two-year basis, the children who at the beginning of the course were one year under age necessarily had to wait two years before they were admitted. They entered the schools at the age of seventeen or seven. This is the reason perhaps that the Talmud gives the alternatives in both instances; and, therefore, admittance to the secondary schools was limited to boys precisely of " sixteen or seventeen years," and entrance into the elementary schools was similarly restricted to the age of " six or seven years."

[29] Tosafot, Baba Batra, 21a, and other commentaries.

That at least the secondary classes were organized on a two-year basis may be assumed from the following. The Talmud records that in Usha, in the middle of the second century C. E., the Rabbis enacted that, " A father should bear with his son up to the age of twelve, after which he should deal with him strictly even as far as to deprive him of his support." [30] The final explanation given in the Talmud is that this law has reference to the study of Mishnah (secondary education). At that particular time the children usually entered the secondary schools at the age of ten years. We may, therefore, interpret the law enacted at Usha to mean that a father did not need to deal harshly with his son unless he failed the first grade of the secondary school and was required to repeat it. Then at the age of twelve the father should realize the apparent laziness of his son and should use all possible measures to correct him and make him more industrious in his studies. This seems to imply that the class was of two years' duration.

The above hypothesis is further supported by more circumstantial evidence. It has been stated earlier that most of the synagogues housing the schools consisted of two rooms. To have several classes with different teachers in one room for the entire day was an impossibility then as it is today. Only two classes could be accommodated conveniently in a synagogue. We know, furthermore, that five years was the period of time that was normally required at the secondary or elementary levels of the current education.[31] Since the children received intruction at home for a year or two before entering the primary school, they could complete the course of study in four years. Similarly, since the secondary schools at first admitted only mature boys, their course could be completed also in four years. If these four years were divided into two classes of two-year terms, each synagogue could conveniently house a complete secondary or elementary school. Such seems to have been the case.

[30] Ketuboth, 50a.

[31] Aboth, 5, 21.

Some additional information is available in reference to the operation of the secondary classes. Notwithstanding the fact that these classes were organized at first for boys of at least sixteen years of age, they underwent a drastic change after the establishment of the elementary schools. The exigencies of the time compelled a change. The Roman yoke was becoming unbearable. Strife seemed unavoidable. If under such uncertain conditions secondary education was postponed till the ages of sixteen to twenty, as in the past, many boys would never have a chance of gaining the fundamental elements of Jewish education. Therefore, in decreeing the establishment of the elementary schools, Joshua b. Gamala arranged that all children completing the elementary studies satisfactorily should be promoted and admitted at once to the secondary schools. Thus at the age of fourteen or fifteen boys completed the studies concerning the fundamental knowledge necessary for their daily life as Jews. This concentration of study in early youth proved especially helpful in the period of exile that immediately followed, because many of these boys had to begin earning their own livelihood and could attend school no longer.

Some of these graduates, however, continued on to the colleges. Having officially completed the necessary entrance requirements as far as knowledge was concerned, they were readily admitted. On account of their youthfulness they were for a year or two excluded from the discussions. In fact, they were not even provided with benches, but had to sit on the ground. After passing this probationary period successfully, they were assigned seats in the back rows and permitted to participate in the discussions. As a student progressed, he was promoted to a seat in a front row. The advanced students were called *baale tresin*, the shield-bearers, because they had to be well armed in Jewish lore in order to defend their opinions when these were contested in the discussions.[82]

After a student had completed satisfactorily his college

[82] See Graetz, II., pp. 356-361.

education, he was ordained as Rabbi in Israel. This was a simple ceremony. The master would officially lay his hand on the head of the student and declare him ordained. This ordination, *smicha* in Hebrew, gave to the student the title of *Rabbi,* master or *zaken,* elder. It gave him also the authority to render decisions in questions of Jewish Law. It declared him, furthermore, to be an important link in the unbroken chain of tradition that was continuous from Moses, the law-giver of Israel. He could be elected to the Sanhedrin. Usually students were not ordained before reaching twenty-two years of age. There were, however, several exceptions. Eleazer b. Azariah, for example, was fully ordained and even elected to the presidency of the college when only eighteen years of age.[33] Josephus boasts that at the age of fourteen he was so fully acquainted with the law, that the high priests and principal men of Jerusalem used to come to consult his opinion regarding the accurate meaning of certain points of the law.[34] Oftentimes, even after being ordained, a student continued his studies at the academy. He was then given a seat in one of the three front rows.

There still remains something to be said about the discipline in the classes. The decorum in the secondary classes that admitted boys of sixteen years and over has already been described in the preceding chapter. When these classes were coordinated with the elementary schools, much better order was established in the classrooms. Nevertheless, it is true that the strap was quite frequently used. The elementary school teachers, especially, are pictured as keeping a strap ready in their hands.[35] The doctrine of the proverb, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," [36] was certainly observed at this time. Such "chastening" was practised at times even in the colleges. The better students, we are told, used to take the scolding and punishment good-naturedly in keeping with the sacred coun-

[33] Kiddushin, 30a; Berakoth, 28a.
[34] *Vita,* 2.
[35] Sukkah, 29a.
[36] Proverbs, 13, 24.

sel, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; reprove a wise man, and he will love thee." [37] Theoretically, a teacher could not be held responsible even for unwitting murder if the pupil died while he was being chastised.[38] There is no evidence, however, of a single case of any such brutality. On the contrary, there is ample evidence that there existed, in a large measure, mutual understanding and respect between teachers and pupils as the following section illustrates.

The Qualifications and the Position of the Teachers

In the periods of Jewish history discussed in this study, there were of course no special teacher-training schools. Great stress was laid upon the possession of adequate knowledge by a man engaged to teach. In selecting, however, a head for the college, the administrative abilities of the candidate were also taken into consideration. It is related, for instance, that Hillel the Elder had eighty disciples of whom Jonathan b. Uzziel ranked highest and Johanan b. Zakkai lowest. Yet Hillel suggested the latter as his successor.[39] A similar incident is recorded of Rabbi Judah, the author of the Mishnah. On his deathbed he called for the Sages of Israel and among other things he said to them: "Although my son Simon is the sage, my son Gamaliel should be *nasi* (president)." [40] These facts seem to demonstrate that the high office of head of a college demanded not only thorough knowledge of the Torah but other qualifications as well.

An assertion made by several writers in the field of Jewish education seems to be incorrect. Because of the Tannaitic statement referred to in the foregoing, these writers claim that Hillel had only eighty disciples. The author offers the following Mishnaic saying as evidence of a misinterpretation: "Five disciples had Rabban Jo-

[37] *Ibid.*, 9, 8. See also Sifri, Deuteronomy, 1, 1; Arakhin, 16b.
[38] Makkoth, 2, 2.
[39] See Sukkah, 28a, and J. T. Nedarim, 5, 7.
[40] Ketuboth, 103b, שמעון בני חכם גמליאל בני נשיא.

hanan b. Zakkai, and these are they.[41] . . ." Did Johanan b. Zakkai only have five disciples in his college at Jabneh? No one would be so naive as to give such a literal interpretation. This famous teacher must have had hundreds of students as did his predecessor, Hillel. The given Tannaitic sources, however, refer only to those disciples who were successful in "receiving"[42] the Torah in its entirety from their master and who were also ordained by him.

The chief qualification of a teacher of the secondary or elementary school was, of course, his possession of sufficient knowledge of the Torah. Piety was a close second. In addition, he had to be patient with the children;[43] he had to have ability to teach; he had to be devoted to his sacred task. A woman was not permitted to be a teacher of children; nor was an unmarried man.[44]

The teachers, furthermore, were generally idealists. Their salaries, as stated previously, were at best no more than a mere compensation for their loss of time. Under such conditions, men engaged in teaching because they loved it, and because they felt that it was a sacred calling which permitted them to do a great deal of good. Therefore, the teachers were usually of high character. This arrangement made the discharging of a teacher a relatively simple task. No livelihood was at stake. A teacher often gladly turned his class over to another more competent than himself. The proof that this was the practice is gathered from a record in the ancient writings that the Sons of Bethyrah surrendered their office as soon as they learned that Hillel was more informed of the Law than they, and had that Babylonian master chosen as president of the Sanhedrin.[45] This custom made it possible

[41] Aboth, 2, 8.

[42] See second chapter of this book, section entitled: "The Development of the School System."

[43] Aboth, 2, 5, ולא הקפדן מלמד.

[44] Kiddushin, 4, 13.

[45] Pesahim, 66a.

that only the best qualified teachers were engaged to teach in the schools.

These facts are evidence of the high respect in which Jewish teachers were held. It is no wonder that the Rabbis taught, " let the fear of thy teacher be as the fear of Heaven." [46] The teachers, on the other hand, were also enjoined to " Let the honor of thy disciple be as dear to thee as thine own." That mutual respect and trust between teacher and pupil existed is evident from the saying of a great teacher: " I learned a great deal of Torah from my teachers, but from my companions I learned more, and from my disciples I learned most of all." [47]

Some masters of the academies, in order to have more personal contact with the students, arranged that their disciples should visit them at their homes on Sabbath. Each student was asked to come on a different Sabbath. Evidence of this is found in the following Tannaitic statement: " Said Rabbi Judah, ' it was my Sabbath, and I accompanied Rabbi Tarfon to his home . . .' " [48] This requirement did not apply, of course, to the youngsters of the elementary or secondary schools. On holidays, however, it was a general custom that all pupils visit their teachers. So, too, even adults visited their rabbis on those festive occasions. This custom was already in vogue during the Biblical period.[49] It demonstrates the high respect that the Jews paid their teachers.

Adult Education

Sufficient evidence is available to show that adult education was offered and enjoyed by the public throughout the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. In fact, it was offered through a number of agencies and institutions. An examination of the forms in which it was conducted follows.

The Biblical Books of Ezra and Nehemiah contain men-

[46] Aboth, 4, 12.
[47] Makkoth, 10a.
[48] Tosef. Negaim, 8, 3.
[49] Second Kings, 4, 23.

tion of public massmeetings at Jerusalem in which the leaders of Israel exhorted the people to correct certain wrongdoings. At some of these gatherings portions of the Pentateuch were read. Explanations were also given at such times in order that the people might fully comprehend the reading.[50] Similarly, at certain special services in the Temple, the High Priest and the King were required to read several sections from the scroll of the Torah for the multitude of people gathered there.[51]

A more frequent form of adult education were the Biblical readings held in the synagogues. From the days of Ezra these readings were given four times a week, twice on Saturday, at the morning and afternoon services, and on Monday and Thursday mornings.[52] Readings were also held on every holiday, fast day, and on every *Rosh Chodesh*, first of the month. No reading assignment contained less than ten verses of the Five Books of Moses. Many contained a great deal more. A quorum of ten adult males was required for each reading. Each verse was read in the original Hebrew and interpreted into the Aramaic,[53] the vernacular of the time. Certain sections of the Prophets were also read and interpreted at many of these services. In that way, even the untutored quickly gained some knowledge of Jewish literature. No one needed to be ignorant of the Law. Clearly, Philo was not mistaken when he declared that the synagogues were chiefly " houses of instruction " in which " the native philosophy " was expounded and every good virtue taught.[54] Furthermore, even the services in the synagogue of those days were educational. Since the liturgy was not as yet entirely fixed and prearranged, the leader of the congregation could use considerable initiative in conducting the service. This arrangement was intended to make the people more attentive to the entire liturgy. It also created a

[50] Nehemiah, 8, 8.
[51] Yoma, 7, 1; Sotah, 7, 8.
[52] Baba Kama, 82a.
[53] Megillah, 4, 4.
[54] *Vita Mosis*, 3, 27.

mild rivalry in the composition of finer and more devotional prayers.

On holidays the Rabbis, in addition, held public discourses in the synagogues at which time they explained and expounded all the laws pertaining to the festival that was being celebrated. Because of the many laws dealing with Passover, such discourses were given several times during the thirty-day period preceding that holiday.[55]

During the Tannaitic period, moreover, the Rabbis delivered sermons for the people twice on every Sabbath, one at the Friday evening service or shortly thereafter and the other at the Saturday morning service.[56] These sermons were usually well attended and served a dual purpose. In the first place, they were educative. People were informed of the details of the Law. Secondly, they were intended to arouse the people emotionally so they would seek more knowledge of their Law and yield a more perfect observance of it.

Adult education was widespread and popular among the Jews. Every Jew knew that he was obligated by sacred Law to study Torah every day of his life. Consequently, many men, even artisans and industrial workers, reserved part of every day for study. Oftentimes, two or three people arranged to come to one home or to the synagogue in order to study together. Sometimes, too, ten people or more organized themselves into a class and secured an instructor to lead them in their studies and discussions. These facts are gathered from the words of the Sages who emphasized the importance of individual and group study. The following serve as illustrations: " If two sit together and words of the Law are spoken between them, the Divine Presence rests between them . . . even if one sits and occupies himself in the Law, the Holy One, blessed is He, appoints him a reward . . . if three have eaten at one table and have spoken over it words of the Law, it is as if they had eaten from the table of God . . . if ten men

[55] Tosef. Megillah, 3, 2.
[56] Gettin, 38b; J. T. Sotah, 1, 4.

sit together and occupy themselves in the Law, the Divine Presence rests among them. . . . " [57]

Adult education was administered in still another form. From the time that the porter at the door of the college at Jabneh was dismissed,[58] adults were permitted to enter the academy and seat themselves on the ground in the rear among the very youthful students, in order to listen to the proceedings.[59] Frequent attendance of this kind helped many people to gain an advanced education.

[57] Aboth, 3, 2-6.
[58] See end of preceding chapter.
[59] Graetz, II., p. 361.

Chapter V

CONTENT OF EDUCATION

The Content of Elementary Education
The Content of Secondary Education
The Content of Higher Education
Educational Activities outside the School System

Chapter V

CONTENT OF EDUCATION

The Content of Elementary Education

Unlike its formal administration, the subject matter of Jewish elementary education was relatively uniform throughout the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. This content was known as *Mikra*, reading. It referred chiefly to the reading and study of the Scriptures. Before the establishment of the elementary schools, parents in their leisure time taught their children. The course of study was prolonged under these conditions, and no student was admitted to the secondary schools before the age of sixteen years. With the organization of the primary schools, this early education was completed normally in four years as was previously shown.

What did *Mikra* consist of? In brief, it contained the study of the Sacred Writings: the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa. All of these Books were already in existence, according to the belief of most historical investigators, about the end of the period of the Soferim. The Pentateuch and most of the Books of the Prophets and the Hagiographa were in existence even before the beginning of the Second Commonwealth. These formed the basis for elementary education during the periods of Jewish history under consideration here. In time the later works, Ezekiel, the Minor Prophets, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, were added to the curriculum.[1] The main emphasis was always placed, however, on the Pentateuch, which contained the divine Law which the Jews were ordained to follow at all times.

At first the child was taught the Hebrew alphabet. He was required to identify each letter by its name. Then he

[1] According to the traditional view, authorship of these Books is credited to the Men of the Great Assembly, Ezra and Nehemiah. See Baba Batra, 14b-15a.

was taught to identify complete words. With the mastery of a few reading exercises, the child was introduced to the study of the Pentateuch. According to post-Tannaitic sources [2] the child began the study of the Pentateuch not with the Book of Genesis, but with Leviticus. Unfortunately we do not possess any documentary evidence of the Tannaitic period itself in regard to this matter. We are told further in the same sources that Rabbi Akiba, on starting his Hebrew studies and mastering the alphabet, began at once the study of Leviticus. This custom seems to have prevailed in the Tannaitic period.

This custom demands some explanation. Why did the Rabbis deem it advisable to let the children forego at first the Book of Genesis with its appeal to the young imagination and have them begin with the Book of Leviticus that deals with the sacrificial rites of the Temple? The reason given by the Rabbis is, " Because the children are pure and the sacrifices are pure, let the pure (children) come and engage in the study of the pure (sacrifices)." This reason seems hardly sufficient. Obviously, it attempts to explain homiletically the long established custom. Various explanations by several modern writers are also untenable as shown by Morris.[3] Neither does his explanation suffice. He says: " Its origin must be sought in post-Temple times—probably after the defeat of Bar-Kokba. . . . There was the danger that the chapters of the Pentateuch which dealt with the sacrificial ceremonial—now fallen into disuse—might be entirely forgotten. And so children were made to begin their studies with the ' law of the priests,' securing for that part of the Bible an honored place in the religious life of the community." If the Rabbis were afraid that the children in the elementary schools would not complete all the five Books of Moses, as this explanation seems to imply, it would seem natural to expect them to give preference to those laws that the children would have need to observe as they matured.

[2] Rabbah, Leviticus, 7; Aboth of Rabbi Nathan, 6.
[3] *The Jewish School*, pp. 89-91.

There is no evidence, moreover, of any such fears. On the other hand, it is known that children were expected to complete the Pentateuch in the primary school and so the sacrificial ceremonials, even without any given preference, would be studied along with the other parts of the five Books of Moses. No more satisfactory is the explanation given by Finkelstein in his book on Rabbi Akiba. He explains the custom as originating with the priests, who, according to him, were the teachers in the days of the Second Temple. In the first place, elementary education in the days of the Second Commonwealth was chiefly parental. Nor is there any evidence that the teachers in the established elementary schools were generally priests. In the second place, why should the priests institute that custom? Is it not the logical procedure to introduce the child to the concepts of the Creator, His people, His revelation and His commandments on Mount Sinai before having him study His sacrificial laws?

The author does not believe that this custom originated during the Second Commonwealth or only after the defeat of Bar-Kokba. In the days of the Second Temple, the child, on starting the study of the Pentateuch, began with the first Book, Genesis, in accord with the traditionally established order of the five Books of Moses. The new custom was initiated immediately after the Temple was destroyed by Titus. In order that the hope for national independence and reestablishment of the Temple in Jerusalem should never fade, the change was advised by the spiritual leaders of Israel. The child, introduced in his early youth to the study of Leviticus, was made aware of the lost glories of Israel and of the important significance that the Temple held in Jewish life. In this manner the hopes of the Jewish people were kept alive in the hearts of the young at a very impressionable age. This seems to be the true reason for the institution of this custom, but obviously it would not be wise to reveal this publicly. Very aptly, nevertheless, do the Rabbis say that the scholar and renowned patriot, Akiba, commenced his studies with the Book of Leviticus.

The teaching of the Bible was not altogether a simple task. Since Hebrew has hardly any vowels, the child had to become familiar with the words and the meaning of the context. The latter served as a guide in reading, because many words in Hebrew are spelled alike consonantally but vocalized differently with varying meanings. Since the great majority of the people spoke Aramaic, the child was taught to translate the text into that language. At Alexandria they translated it into their vernacular, a dialect of Greek. Some scholars are in doubt whether Philo, the Alexandrian philospher (c. 20 B. C. E.-45 C. E.), knew the Bible in the original Hebrew, since he constantly quoted the Septuagint in his works. These scholars overlooked the fact that Philo wrote his works for non-Jews as well as for Jews and hence found the Septuagint better suited to his purpose. There is no reason, however, to believe that the Jewish schools of Alexandria did not teach the Scriptures from the original Hebrew.

Not only was the child required to know the translation of the Hebrew words, but he also had to memorize passages of the text. We find, therefore, that the children were often asked by their elders to quote the Biblical verses they learned at their lessons in school.[4] The translation in those days was by no means strictly literal. It contained oftentimes paraphrastic explanations of the text. This is evident from the ancient Targumim, the Aramaic translations of the Bible, of which a great part is still extant and are frequently exegetical. So, too, many explanatory notes of Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews* in reference to certain incidents and commandments related in the Bible, very likely were adopted from the expositions given in the schoolhouses in those days.

Most historians have been of the opinion that writing was quite an uncommon art among the Jews in the Biblical and post-Biblical periods. One modern writer goes so far as to maintain that even in the Tannaitic period " the ele-

[4] For example, see Hagigah, 15a-b, and Gittin, 58a.

mentary school itself did not as a rule teach writing to its pupils." [5] We possess now, however, new archaeological evidence that throws considerable light on this subject. The author refers to the discovery that was made by the Wellcome Expedition in Palestine at Tell ed-Duweir, or the Biblical town of Lachish, in February 1935. The unearthed potsherds with the Hebrew inscriptions, generally referred to as the Lachish ostraca, have already been definitely established as belonging to the period of the Prophet Jeremiah. These ostraca show that in the days of the great Prophets writing was more prevalent than was formerly believed. Writing was not limited to the literary addresses of the Prophets which were thought to possess a message beyond their own immediate generation. Neither was it restricted to sacred use and to the annalists of the kings; nor were the Prophets and Priests the only scribes. The Lachish ostraca contain a number of messages that were committed to writing by servants for their masters. In some of these reference is made to the preceding letters of the masters. Writing was hence used for general communication. The cursive style of the discovered inscriptions further shows the high development of the art of writing, even in the final days of the First Temple. The children were no doubt taught by their parents not only to read Hebrew but also to write it. When Aramaic became the native language of the Jews, a similar condition prevailed as is evidenced by the inscriptions of the Elephantine Papyri of the fifth century B. C. E. that were discovered earlier. That writing was common in the elementary schools, when these were established, may be deduced also from the name given to the primary teachers—*soferim*, scribes. The only kind of writing that was not so widespread was the special form used for the Holy Scrolls containing the Pentateuch.

For textbooks, the Books of the Bible were written on separate scrolls and given to the children. The Pentateuch was also written on five separate scrolls. Some teachers

[5] Nathan Morris, *The Jewish School*, p. 83.

desired to subdivide even these latter Books in order to simplify further teaching exercises. The authorities were, however, divided in opinion whether that was permissible,[6] and so the status quo was generally continued in practice. Since numerous copies were not available at that time, usually several children studied from one textbook.

Although the Bible was the chief content of elementary education, the child was taught a number of other subjects in relation to it. The Bible, it must be remembered, was not taught only as literature. It was taught as the Book of Life, whose principles and precepts were divine. Religion, ethics, and morality were hence the oustanding subjects of the curriculum. The knowledge and practice of these matters were most essential. The aphorisms and stories of many of the known books of the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha were frequently used by the teachers for illustration and for moralization.[7] Since the contents of the Lachish ostraca and the Elephantine Papyri reveal a high literary form of classical Hebrew and Aramaic, we are justified in assuming that grammar and composition were taught to the children, probably not as distinct subjects but certainly in relation to reading and writing. Similarly, some elements of arithmetic, geography, and history were probably taught in conjunction with the reading of the Bible. The child was also taught and made to memorize certain prayers of the liturgy of the Synagogue. Before reaching the secondary schools, the pupil was usually able to compute, from his knowledge of the Bible and a few other historical facts, the Jewish calendar year. Even oral Hebrew was mastered by the child through the study of the Bible. Therefore, Mikra was truly the all-inclusive subject matter of elementary education.

The discussion of the content of elementary education

[6] Gittin, 60a.

[7] See, for example, Sifri on Deuteronomy, 11, 22, וכתוב במגילת חסידים (סתרים) אם תעזבני יום יומים אעזבך.

would be incomplete without a statement of the pre-school education. As soon as the child was able to speak, it was customary that the father teach him to recite some Biblical verses, among which was the *Shema*, " Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." This verse was understood as a confession of pure monotheism.[8] So, too, the child was initiated into the observance of various customs as soon as his age permitted. He was also taught to observe certain hygienic rules of cleanliness and health. Any child able, by holding on to his father's hand, to go from Jersualem up to the Temple Mount, was required to be brought to the Temple at the three Festivals of the year, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.[9] Before the holiday the child was told by his parents the significance of the forthcoming celebration. As the child grew a little older, he was required to memorize certain portions of the liturgy of the holiday.[10] In these ways many elements of Jewish lore and mores were impressed upon the minds of the children from their very early youth, long before their formal education in the elementary schools was begun.

The Content of Secondary Education

During the Tannaitic period secondary education was identified by the word, *Mishnah*, while higher education was called *Talmud* or *Midrash*, and elementary education, as previously stated, *Mikra.* The number of Tannaitic statements that may be cited as evidence of this is legion. Since this classification is important for the understanding of the Jewish educational system, three ancient sources are cited. First, the Mishnah which describing the various stages of a person's life says, " At five

[8] Deuteronomy, 6, 4; Sukkah, 42a. Professor Swift gives unfortunately a poor translation of this verse in his book, *Education in Ancient Israel*, p. 63. The Hebrew word, *ehad*, never means " alone," but rather " one." Compare with Genesis, 2, 18.

[9] Hagigah, 1, 1.

[10] See, for example, Pesahim, 10, 4, in regard to the " four questions " on Passover; also Sukkah, 3, 15.

years the age is reached for the study of Mikra, at ten for the study of Mishnah . . . at fifteen for the study of Talmud." [11] This statement clearly refers to the three levels of education that were current in the time of its spokesman. Second, the Baraita which, giving in detail all the subjects that Johanan b. Zakkai mastered, lists them in the following order, " Mikra, Mishnah, and Talmud. . . . " [12] This indicates that he completed first the three levels of the school curriculum of his time. The other subjects referred to later in the quotation are either details of these three or themes that were usually not a part of the regular program, but were, nevertheless, included in the education of this disciple of Hillel. Third, the Talmud records that once when a famine occurred in the days of Rabbi, he opened his store-houses and said, " Let those who mastered Mikra enter, and those who mastered Mishnah and those who mastered Talmud. . . . " [13] These are offered as evidence that the three levels of education in the Tannaitic period were identified by Mikra, Mishnah, and Talmud, respectively.

Some scholars maintain that the term *Mishnah,* etymologically, means " second." It is true that its masculine form is frequently used in the Bible in that very sense. Because it came " second " or next to *Mikra*, it is alleged, *Mishnah* was used to connote secondary education. Similarly, since the word *Gemara*, which in a later age replaced the word *Talmud,* means in its Hebrew origin " completion," these writers asserted that *Gemara* was used for higher education because with it one completed his schooling. While these views are interesting they do not seem to have historical accuracy. The word *Mishnah* is derived rather from a root *shanah,* which means " repeat." Unlike the subject matter of *Mikra*, that was written, *Mishnah* was the Oral Law that had to be memor-

[11] Aboth, 5, 21.
[12] Sukkah, 28a.
[13] Baba Batra, 8a. See also Baraitas of Baba Metzia, 33a and Sotah, 44a. Rabbi Judah the Patriarch was also called " Rabbi " *par excellence.*

ized by constant repetition. From the corresponding Aramaic root *tena*, the word *Tanna* (pl. Tannaim) is derived, a name that was applied to a master whose saying was recorded in the *Mishnah* or in the other contemporary legal works. Mishnah, par excellence, refers to the collection of Oral Laws made by Rabbi Judah, the Patriarch, at the close of the Tannaitic period.[14]

What did the old *Mishnah* consist of or what was the content of secondary education in the days of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim? To answer this question one needs to proceed very cautiously. Since the Mishnah was taught orally at the time, no definite documentary evidence exists, nor can one take the text of the Mishnah as it exists today as an example of what secondary education was several centuries ago. After a careful study and survey of the ancient sources, the following conclusions have been reached.

When a child completed the Scriptures in the elementary school, he did not stop studying the Bible. On the contrary, he proceeded to study it with more diligence and in more detail in the secondary school. That was true especially of the Pentateuch, for a new feature had been added. Whenever a certain portion that dealt with a matter of law was read in class, the teacher, orally, summarized all the details of that specific law that he knew, from tradition, and the children were required to memorize them. For example, when the class read the Biblical verse, " the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work," [15] the teacher recited, " The main classes of work are forty save one: sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing . . . and taking out aught from one domain into another," " if a man took out aught in his right hand or in his left hand, in his bosom or on his

[14] See Strack's *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, chapter I, and Herbert Danby's chapter entitled " Introduction " in his translation of *The Mishnah*. See also next section on " The Content of Higher Education."

[15] Exodus, 20, 10.

shoulder, he is culpable," " if a man took out a loaf into the public domain he is culpable; if two men took it out they are not culpable," " if a man built aught (on the Sabbath) how much must he build to become culpable? He is culpable who builds aught soever, or who at all hews stone, or wields a hammer, or chisels or bores a hole. This is the general rule: if a man performs work on the Sabbath and his work is enduring, he is culpable," " he is culpable who ploughs aught soever, or who at all weeds or cuts off dead leaves or prunes," and " he is culpable who writes two letters (of the alphabet), whether with his right hand or with his left, whether the same or different letters, whether in different inks or in any language." [16] Many such details concerning a Scriptural law were thus included in the teacher's exposition.

To cite another example, when a class studied the Biblical text, " And in the seventh month on the first day of the month, . . . it is a day of blowing (the shofar) unto you," the teacher explained and had the class memorize all the details of that particular law of which the following are illustrative: " All shofars are valid save that of a cow, since it is a 'horn,'" " the shofar (blown in the Temple) at the New Year was (made from the horn) of the wild goat, straight, with its mouthpiece overlaid with gold," " a shofar that has been split and stuck together again is not valid," and " the manner of blowing the shofar is three blasts (a sustained, a quavering, and another sustained blast) thrice repeated. A sustained blast is three times the length of a quavering blast, and a quavering blast is three times the length of a moaning." [17] In the same manner, when the secondary classes reached the Biblical injunction, " when ye pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you that the man that killeth any person through error may flee thither," details of this law were presented by the teacher in somewhat the

[16] Sabbath, 7, 2; 10, 3 and 5; 12, 1-3.
[17] Numbers, 29, 1; Rosh Hashonah, 3, 2; 3, 3; 3, 6; 4, 9.

following manner: "This is the general rule: he (that causes death) in the course of his coming down must escape into exile, but if not in the course of his coming down he need not escape into exile," "the father must escape into exile because of his son, and the son because of his father," and "Whither may they go into exile? To the cities of refuge; to the three that are beyond Jordan or to the three that are in the land of Canaan . . . the three cities beyond Jordan grant no right of asylum until the three were chosen in the land of Israel." [18] This kind of treatment was the essential character of *Mishnah* in the days of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. In its setting it resembled the Tannaitic works, Mekilta, Sifra, Sifre, that are based also on the text of the Pentateuch; but in its content and conciseness it resembled more the Mishnah of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch and, still more, the old *Megillat Taanit*.[19]

The Mishnah which was redacted by Rabbi about the year 200 C. E. is differently arranged. He compiled and summarized all the Mishnahs that were previously in use, and arranged them into six major Orders or Sections: Seeds, Festival, Women, Damages, Sacrifices, Purities. Each of these is divided into separate tractates or books numbering in all sixty-one.[20] Each book deals with certain definite laws, and is divided into chapters and paragraphs. This Mishnah, written in new Hebrew, records all the traditional oral laws as well as brief expositions, disputations, and other sayings of the Rabbis which its author had investigated and thought valuable enough for inclusion in his authoritative work. Whether the Mishnah was actually written down by Rabbi is still a matter of

[18] Numbers, 35, 10-11; Makkoth, 2, 1; 2, 3; 2, 4.

[19] An ancient legal chronicle that is quoted in the Mishnah.

[20] This is in accord with the view of Maimonides, given in the introduction of his commentary on the Mishnah. Other scholars consider Baba Kama, Baba Metzia and Baba Batra as three separate books and thus arrive at the number sixty-three. Still others hold the opinion of Maimonides that these three ought to be considered as parts of one treatise but make one further combination, mostly of Sanhedrin and Makkoth, and thus get the even number of sixty. See also next chapter, note 26.

dispute. Nevertheless, this great code of law became the standard textbook for secondary education for many centuries.

The foregoing explains an old tradition that, from a superficial examination, seems perplexing. The tradition is to the effect that the six Orders of the Mishnah extant today are a condensation of the six or seven hundred Orders that had been in existence in the days of Rabbi.[21] Recalling, however, that the Pentateuch contains six hundred and thirteen laws [22] and as each Scriptural law contained in those days its own Order or part of *Mishnah,* then the significance of the tradition is clear.

Besides learning and memorizing the *Mishnah*, the child was also taught in the secondary schools traditions concerning the non-legal sections of the Bible. Very likely the child was required to work out and to memorize an historical chronology of the Jewish people on the order of the Tannaitic work, *Seder Olam.* Since the multifarious details of the laws of the Torah involved many subjects, the child had to be made familiar, also, with mathematics and the sciences that were known in those days. For instance, in learning the laws of permissible and prohibitive foods and those relating to blemishes that render animals unfit for sacrifices in the Temple, the child learned some animal anatomy, physiology, zoology, and medicine. So, too, in learning to reckon the Jewish calendar, the child was familiarized with certain elements of mathematics and astronomy. The child also obtained some knowledge of botany and agriculture when he studied the laws applicable to mixing and planting seeds. Certain elements of architecture were presented to the child when he studied the laws relative to the building of the Taber-

[21] Hagigah, 14a, פליגי בה רב פפא ורבנן חד אמר שש מאות סדרי משנה וחד אמר שבע מאות סדרי משנה. See also Sefer Hakritut, IV. 1, 11.

[22] Makkoth, 23b. Whether this exact number was accepted by all the ancient Rabbis is still a matter of conjecture. See Ramban at the beginning of Sefer ha-Mizvot.

nacle and Temple.[23] These subjects were never studied directly, however; they were associated and integrated with the chief content of education—Torah, the Law.

The Content of Higher Education

The foregoing section explained that the content of higher education was known by the term, *Talmud* or *Midrash.* What do these words really signify when used in reference to the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim?

This question, like the preceding one in regard to Mishnah, presents many difficulties, especially in view of the fact that these terms have now come to have very definite connotations. The word Talmud is now applied to the combined works of the Mishnah and the Gemara; the last term refers to the Amoraic discussions on the Mishnah. *Amoraim*, speakers, is the general name for the Jewish learned masters who were active from the time of the conclusion of the Mishnah to about the end of the fifth century of the common era. There are, in fact, two Talmuds: the Babylonian, which records primarily the commentaries of the Babylonian scholars, and the Palestinian or the Jerusalem, which was redacted at least a century earlier and which is substantially concerned with the discussions of the Palestinian Amoraim. The term Midrash refers now to those extant literary works of the Rabbis that contain mostly interpretations and expositions of the non-legal sections of the Bible and that were redacted long after the Mishnah. *Talmud* and *Midrash* hence possess different meanings when used in reference to Jewish education during the several centuries preceding the redaction of the Mishnah.

The word *Midrash*, that is commonly translated " study," in its Hebrew origin means " to search out," " to inquire into," or " to expound." Of Ezra it is said in the

[23] This information may be gleaned from the various books of the Mishnah dealing with the special laws referred to.

Bible that "he had set his heart to 'expound' (derosh) the Law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." [24] *Midrash* thus denotes "exposition" of the Scriptures. The following may serve as an illustration: "This did Rabbi Eleazar b. Azariah *expound* (darash): 'From all your sin shall ye be clean before the Lord'—for transgressions that are between man and God the Day of Atonement effects atonement; but for transgressions that are between a man and his fellow the Day of Atonement effects atonement only if he has appeased his fellow." [25] This lesson is expounded from the Biblical phrase, "before the Lord." Hence it is a case of Midrash.

How was this kind of educational exposition carried on in the schools? In the colleges further study of the Pentateuch was diligently pursued. This time the students already familiar with the written text of the Law and with the oral traditions that pertained to each subject, were required to study the text once more and to examine and to consider the meaning of each word and letter thereof. Everything in the Divine Book was considered purposeful and meaningful. Certain hermeneutical rules were used by which the text was fully expounded. Hillel listed seven such rules. Later others were added.[26] By this method the students were able to discover that most of the oral traditions of the *Mishnah* were actually inherent in the text. Similarly, they discovered certain underlying principles through which they were able to develop new details of the laws. If these were acceptable to a majority of the college, they were added to their *Mishnah.* In time these would percolate through to the secondary schools and be added to the *Mishnah* previously taught there. For that reason, the subject matter of the *Mishnah* varied at times in the different secondary schools. Consequently, in accordance with a late source, Rabbi, in redacting his

[24] Ezra, 7, 10.
[25] Leviticus, 16, 30; Yoma, 8, 9.
[26] Tosef. Sanhedrin, 7 end; introductory chapter of the Sifra.

Mishnah made use of thirteen separate versions of the Oral Laws.[27] Usually these additions, and especially those of the Tannaitic period, bore the name of their original author, examples of which abound in the Mishnah. Sometimes conflicting views were also included. At other times, the discussions in the college yielded a conclusion contrary to a traditional law of the *Mishnah.* In that case both versions of the law were given with some such explanation: " so was it enjoined in the first Mishnah, but after them the court taught . . ." or " after them Rabbi So and So said. . . ." [28] Oftentimes, the method of approach at the colleges was exactly in reverse order. A practical question of law would be raised and brought into the college by a certain individual who asked for guidance. If the *Mishnah* did not contain an explicit answer, the question then became a real problem for the college. An answer would have to be found. The problem, then, was carefully analyzed in order to discover whether it was comparable to other matters already included in the *Mishnah.* If that was not the case, then further exposition and exegesis of the Scriptural text were tried until a solution satisfactory to a majority present was reached. This method of approach was used especially at Jabneh,[29] where the college was amalgamated with the Sanhedrin.

The subject matter of the colleges, like that of the secondary schools, was committed to memory by the students. It was mastered so perfectly that quite a portion of it has come down to us in the Mekilta, Sifra, and Sifre. Some authentic and concise statements of the old Midrash may also be found in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and the Baraitas quoted in the Talmud. Much of it, however, has unfortunately been lost.

Since the Pentateuch contained legal as well as nonlegal materials, the Midrash might be classified as of two kinds: Halakah and Haggadah. Midrash Halakah con-

[27] See Nedarim, 41a.
[28] See, for example, Ketuboth, 5, 3; Nazir, 6, 1; Eduyot, 7, 2.
[29] See Berakoth, 28a. See also Rashi, Sotah, 20a, end.

tained the exposition of the text that dealt with matters of law, while Midrash Haggadah was concerned with the non-legal parts of the text.[30] Thus the entire Pentateuch was expounded in the higher academies. Comparatively little has been preserved of the ancient Midrash Haggadah. A fine example of it, however, is found in the works of Philo, if we delete it of the philosophical doctrines, mostly of Plato, that he attempted to read into the texts. What does remain of it in the Tannaitic sources is sufficient to show that it was more voluminous than the Midrash Halakah. The following may serve as an illustration of Midrash Halakah as expounded in the colleges:

"*Seven Days Shalt Thou Eat Unleavened Bread.* One Scriptural passage says: 'Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread,' (Exodus, 13, 6) and one passage says: 'Six days shalt thou eat unleavened bread,' (Deuteronomy, 16, 8). How can both these passages be maintained? The seventh day had been included in the more inclusive statement and was then taken out of it. Now that which is singled out from a more inclusive statement means to teach us something about that whole statement. Hence just as on the seventh day it is optional, so on all the other days it is optional. Perhaps, however, just as on the seventh day it is optional, so on all the rest, including even the first night, it is optional? The Scriptural passage: 'In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at even ye shall eat unleavened bread,' (Exodus, 12, 18) fixes it as an obligation to eat unleavened bread on the first night. It is therefore impossible for you to argue as in the latter version, but you must argue as in the former version: The seventh day had been included in the more inclusive statement and was taken out of it. Now, that which is singled out from a more inclusive statement means to teach us something about the whole statement, that is, just as on the seventh day it is optional, so on all the other days it is optional." [31]

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[30] Note Sukkah 28a and Baba Batra 8a where Halakah and Haggadah are mentioned immediately after Mikra, Mishnah, Talmud (Gemara in the censored editions). Undoubtedly, Halakah and Haggadah are used here descriptively of the two aspects of Talmud. In the first instance both are explicitly included, while in the latter case they are used to exclude the necessity of both in that particular instance. For other views regarding the origin and significance of these terms, see the Jewish Encyclopedia on "Midrash."

[31] Mekilta on Exodus, 13, 6.

In this manner it was argued that to eat *matzo*, unleavened bread, was obligatory only on the first night of Passover, while on the other days and nights of Passover this was not required by law unless one desired it. That a Jew was not permitted, however, to eat leavened bread during the entire holiday of Passover is explicitly stated in another Scriptural law.

Another quotation from the Mekilta may similarly serve as an illustration of Midrash Haggadah as was taught in the colleges.

"*Now Jethro, priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard* . . . (Exodus, 18, 1). Originally they called him merely Jether, as it is said: 'And Moses went and returned to Jether his father-in-law' (Exodus, 4, 18). After he had performed good deeds, they added one more letter to his name so that he was called Jethro. You find this also in the case of Abraham, whom they originally called merely Abram. And when he performed good deeds, they added one letter more, and he was called Abraham. You find this also in the case of Sarah. Originally they called her merely Sarai. But when she performed good deeds they added to her name by putting in a larger letter so that she was called Sarah. And so you find it also in the case of Joshua, whom they originally called merely Hoshea. And when he performed good deeds, they added one more letter to his name so that he was called Joshua, as it is said: 'And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua' (Numbers, 13, 16). And there are others from whose names they took off one letter. You can learn this from the case of Ephron, whom they originally called Ephrown. After he had taken the money from our father Abraham, they took off one letter from his name and he was called merely Ephron, as it is said: 'And Abraham hearkened unto Ephrown and Abraham weighed to Ephron' (Genesis, 23, 16). And you see it also in the case of Jonadab whom they originally called Jehonadab. But after he had come to act as he did, they took off one letter from his name so that he was called merely Jonadab. In this connection the sages said: Let a man never associate with a wicked person, not even for the purpose of bringing him near to the Torah." [32]

Oftentimes the colleges would formulate their discussions and expositions very concisely and in a manner of a

[32] *Ibid.*, Exodus, 18, 1.

running commentary on the Scriptural text as the following illustrates: "*I have not eaten thereof in my mourning*—thus if he had eaten during mourning he may not make the Avowal; *nor have I removed aught thereof being unclean*—thus if he had set it apart in uncleanness he may not make the Avowal; *nor given thereof for the dead*—I have not used aught thereof for a coffin or wrappings for a corpse nor have I given it to other mourners; *I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God*—I have brought it to His chosen Temple; *I have done according to all that Thou hast commanded me*—I have rejoiced and made others to rejoice therewith." [33] At times the Midrash would be so concisely formulated as to make the deductions seem unwarranted, as the following may illustrate: "*Nor shall he* (the King of Israel) *multiply wives to himself*—eighteen only . . . *neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold*—enough to pay (his soldiers') wages only." [34] No doubt the colleges must have spent some time in expounding these Biblical texts in order to arrive at these conclusions. The lengthy expositions, however, were omitted from the permanent record, and the students were required to memorize only these brief statements which were expected to serve as clues for recalling all the discussions that justified the given conclusions.

We are now ready to define the terms, *Midrash* and *Talmud*, used in reference to the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. *Midrash* refers to the method of exposition employed in the studies of the academies of higher Jewish learning and that was sufficiently illustrated in the above quotations. *Talmud*, the more general term meaning "study" or "learning," refers to the already formulated expositions that had to be memorized in the colleges.

Before completing the discussion on the content of higher education, mention must be made of the conflict-

[33] Deuteronomy, 26, 14; Maaser Sheni, 5, 12.
[34] Deuteronomy, 17, 17; Sanhedrin, 2, 4.

ing views regarding its place in the school curriculum. At least one scholar of the second century C. E. held the opinion that Midrash should be offered in the secondary schools.[35] He believed that from a study of Midrash, the student would gradually come to know all the details of the laws, the essence of *Mishnah*. Although this view went unheeded in the Tannaitic times, it is of vital significance in the history of Jewish education, because of the fact that in the last few centuries this view finally prevailed in the Jewish European schools, for in them the child was generally introduced to the study of Gemara just after completing the Pentateuch.

Educational Activities outside the School System

That secular knowledge was not a foreign element in the elementary and secondary schools has previously been shown; that it was pursued even to a greater extent in the academies of higher learning is so obvious that mention need hardly be made. The following statement recorded in the Talmud in the name of a scholar who lived in the second century of the common era: " The man who understands astronomy and does not pursue the study of it, of that man Scripture says, ' they regard not the work of the Lord, neither have they considered the operation of His hands,' "[36] seems to indicate that this secular kind of knowledge was encouraged. What is more interesting in this connection is the record in the ancient writings of several scholars who conducted practical experiments outside of the school in order to establish the truth of certain matters that they discussed at the college. Rabbi Simon b. Halafta of the second century C. E. was for this reason called the " experimenter." The Talmud relates a very fascinating experiment that he conducted with ants in order to verify whether the Biblical assertion that the ant has " no chief, overseer, or ruler " was literally true. This scholar also tried his hand at practical surgery. At one

[35] This is the author's interpretation of the Baraita, Kiddushin, 49a: " What is Mishnah? . . . Rabbi Judah says, Midrash."

[36] Isaiah, 5, 12; Sabbath, 75a.

time when his hen dislocated its hip-bone, he attached to it a tube of reed, and the hen recovered. We are also told that once he wanted to disprove Rabbi Judah's theory that a hen plucked alive was bound to have a fatal organic disease and, therefore, be unfit for food. Rabbi Simon took a hen in this condition, wrapped it in the bronzer's apron and placed it near a warm stove. The report states that soon a great many new feathers began to grow out and the hen survived.[37] This scholar also conducted experiments with the mountain-cock.[38] The Talmud further relates that the disciples of Rabbi Ishmael, a noted contemporary of Rabbi Akiba, once dissected the body of a prostitute who had been condemned to death by the king and discovered that a woman's body contains two hundred and fifty-two bones or joints.[39]

Although educational matters unrelated to the Torah were held in low esteem by the Jewish scholars, nevertheless, there were a number of other subjects studied by many Jews outside the regular school system. The learning of foreign languages furnishes a good example of this. There is no doubt that during the Hellenistic period many Jews took up the study of Greek. Some even attempted to learn all the languages current at that time, numbering about seventy in all.[40] Many foreign words forced their way into the vocabulary of the schools and can still be found in the Tannaitic writings. Very interesting is the testimony of Josephus, " I have taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks and to understand the elements of the Greek language, although I have so long accustomed myself to speak our own language, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness; for our nation does not encourage those that learn the languages

[37] Hullin, 57b.

[38] Rabbah, Leviticus, 22, and on Ecclesiastes, 5, 8. Professor Joseph Klausner in his article, להתחדשות החקירה בישראל, " Hadoar," 1928, erred in asserting that it was Rabbi Simon b. Yohai, who conducted this experiment. Obviously, he was misled by referring only to the first source where the name given is Rabbi Simon. The second source, however, gives the name in full—Rabbi Simon b. Halafta.

[39] Bekhoroth, 45a.

[40] See, for example, Shekalim, 5, 1.

of many nations . . . because they look upon this sort of accomplishment as common, not only to all sorts of free men, but to as many of the servants as please to learn them. But they give him the testimony of being a wise man, who is fully acquainted with our laws, and is able to interpret their meaning." [41] From later sources it is evident, however, that certain individuals were, at a later date, encouraged to learn Greek and that a special school was established for this purpose in order to make it easier for the Jews to contact the governmental authorities.[42]

Whether an interdict was ever imposed against learning Greek philosophy is still a matter of dispute. It certainly was deprecated by some scholars.[43] Others, nevertheless, did learn Greek philosophy, the best examples being, of course, Philo and Josephus.

We find also that many were skilled in gymnastics.[44] Many were unusually skillful in military affairs [45] and in swimming. Josephus, for instance, relates in his "Life" [46] that when his boat was shipwrecked in the Adriatic Sea, he with others of the crew swam all night until they were saved by another ship. Mention is also made in the Mishnah of certain people who possessed a special craft of writing, a special art in singing, and other unusual skills.[47] Great skill and dexterity were required of the priests for the performance of a number of the services in the Temple. Special teachers were engaged to teach these arts to the young priests.[48]

The Jews also possessed some esoteric knowledge in the days of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. What was the exact nature of that knowledge is a matter of dispute. It dealt with the first chapters of Genesis and Ezekiel, the nature of creation and the "Chariot," *merka-*

[41] *Antiquities of the Jews,* Book XX., 11, 2.
[42] Sotah, 49b.
[43] See Baba Kama, 82b; Sotah, 9, 14, and Maimonides on same. Menahoth, 99b; Sifra, Leviticus, 18, 4 (in some texts).
[44] See, for example, Baraita, Sukkah, 53a.
[45] See "Maccabees" and "Wars of the Jews."
[46] Section, 3.
[47] Yoma, 3, 11.
[48] This information is gleaned from the Gemara, Ketuboth, 106a.

bah. The Mishnah ordained: " the Story of Creation may not be expounded before two persons, nor the vision of the Chariot before one alone, unless he is a Sage that understands of his own knowledge." [49] Philo's works give the impression that he was of the conviction that these subjects were comparable to Greek philosophy. In fact, this idea was shared by many Jews in Alexandria in the first century B. C. E. who believed that the philosophic literature of the Greeks was originally borrowed or stolen from the Jews, who lost it in times of adversity and stress.[50] Such was also the firm conviction of the mediaeval Jewish philosopher, Maimonides.[51] Modern scholars are of the opinion that the mystical literature of the Jews was chiefly theosophical. There is no doubt, however, that the Jews did engage at times in philosophical speculations. Josephus, for instance, quotes the following from Aristotle's discourse concerning a certain Jew: "Now, for a great part of what this Jew said, it would be too long to recite it, but what includes in it both wonder and philosophy, it may not be amiss to discourse of . . . he conversed with us and with other philosophical persons, and made a trial of our skill in philosophy; and as he had lived with many learned men, he communicated to us more information than he received from us." [52]

There is sufficient evidence in the ancient sources to demonstrate that the scholars possessed knowledge of a great many parables. Of Johanan b. Zakkai it is related that he learned many kinds of parables pertaining to various subjects.[53] Rabbi Meir was described as a great maker of parables.[54] Many of the parables of the New Testament came originally from Jewish sources. These parables were used, especially, in public discourses and sermons as a device for holding the people's attention and for inculcating moral lessons.

[49] Hagigah, 2, 1.
[50] Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen,* III., 2, 3rd. ed. p. 347.
[51] " Guide of the Perplexed," 1, ch. 71.
[52] *Against Apion,* Book 1., section 22. For Tannaitic sources see, for example, Erubin, 13b.
[53] Sukkah, 28a. [54] Sotah, 9, 15.

Chapter VI

PEDAGOGICAL METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

Psychological Principles of Education
Methods of Teaching

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Psychological Principles of Education

Although the preceding chapters deal with specific aspects concerning the history of Jewish education, they contain, nevertheless, some information regarding the educational methods and principles that were generally employed in instruction. These references were unavoidable, because of the very nature of education. Education is a synthetic phenomenon that involves many aspects. To abstract one from the other may mar the entire conception. This chapter, in order to avoid repetition, is devoted exclusively to those methods and principles of teaching that have not been discussed before or that have not received sufficient treatment.

The psychological principle of education that merits first consideration is cognizance of the relative differences existing among pupils in regard to their mental abilities and capacities and that is now known by the term " individual differences." Notwithstanding that this concept is of recent origin and is associated with the modern techniques of objective tests and measurements, we find that the Rabbis of the Tannaitic period not only knew that such differences existed among the pupils but also endeavored to classify them. They said, for example, " There are four types among pupils; swift to hear and swift to lose—his gain is cancelled by his loss; slow to hear and slow to lose—his loss is cancelled by his gain; swift to hear and slow to lose—this is a happy lot; slow to hear and swift to lose—this is an evil lot." [1] " Slow to lose " obviously refers to a student whose memory is good and who retains the lesson indefinitely, while " swift to lose " implies the opposite quality. Similarly, " swift to hear " applies to one

[1] Aboth, 5, 12.

with a good memory who is able to repeat the entire exercise after hearing it once, and " slow to hear " refers to the pupil who requires several repetitions in order to recite it. The Rabbis thus recognized two kinds of retention, one for long range and the other for the immediate recall. This classification hence refers to the retentive faculties of the students. Another classification was given in reference to the intelligence of the disciples, as follows: " There are four types among them that sit in the presence of the Sages: the sponge, the funnel, the strainer, and the sieve. ' The sponge '—which absorbs everything; ' the funnel '—which takes in at this end and lets out at the other; ' the strainer '—which lets out the wine and collects the lees; ' the sieve '—which extracts the coarsely-ground flour and collects the fine flour." [2]

Very likely these classifications were intended and used for different periods in the education of a child. The first must have been employed in the elementary and secondary schools where retentiveness played the most significant rôle. There the child had to memorize Biblical passages, the translation of many words, and the *Mishnah.* Imagination and intelligence were of secondary importance. In the colleges, however, the reverse was true. To discover the correct exposition of a Scriptural text or to solve a problem of law, required intelligence. Although the students still had to memorize much of the discussion, nevertheless, the prime essential of a good student at college was a high grade of wisdom or native intelligence. The second classification was, therefore, applied in the colleges. The parallel introductory statements of the two quoted passages, " There are four types among pupils " and " There are four types among them that sit in the presence of the Sages," indicate and substantiate the above.

How were these classifications used in the schools? The teachers of old utilized them very much in the same manner as some of the modern classifications of pupils are

[2] *Ibid.,* 15.

used. Those children who were deficient in retentiveness were given additional drill; those who were slow in understanding were given further explanation. At times the teacher required those pupils who were first to master the subject, to coach the others. Individual differences were thus taken care of.

It is interesting to note that instead of the modern triple classification of bright, average, and inferior pupils, the old Jewish classification was fourfold. This provides more categories for taking care of individual differences, albeit not so easy. Another interesting factor is that this classification was based on observation of certain specific and well-defined traits, and so apparently avoided many of the fallacies of subjective testing, against which modern educators have objected.

Although these classifications of pupils came into existence toward the close of the Tannaitic period, yet we find evidence of some such classification in much earlier times. We are told, for instance, that the eighty disciples of Hillel were divided into three groups or categories.[3] Similarly, Johanan b. Zakkai characterized one of his disciples as " a plastered cistern which loses not a drop," and another as " an ever-flowing spring." [4] Similar attempts at classification were made by other Rabbis [5] before the above definite fourfold divisions were recorded in the Mishnah. In all, they show that the teachers were aware of the existence of individual differences and that they tried in their own ways to cope with that problem.

Several other psychological principles of education were known and applied during the Tannaitic times. Akiba, for example, advised his disciples, " when you teach your son, teach him out of a corrected book," [6] for he was aware of the psychological danger of exposing a child to error. Rabbi Judah similarly said, " Be heedful in study, for an unwitting error in study is accounted deliberate transgres-

[3] Sukkah, 28a.
[4] Aboth, 2, 8.
[5] See, for example, Sifri on Deut., 11, 22, and Gittin, 67a.
[6] Pesahim, 112a.

sion." [7] Students were also advised to follow the Biblical precept, " thine eyes shall see thy teachers," for in facing the teacher, the pupil might better understand him and learn a great deal more than he would otherwise.[8] Similarly, pupils were advised to recite their exercises out loud. This was done for two reasons: first, as an aid for better retention, and second, as an aid for comprehension, since the student could thereby ascertain whether the ideas were clear and well-arranged in his mind.[9] Oftentimes the teacher would cross-examine his pupils or would present them with a false statement in order to excite their interest and to sharpen their wits. In correcting the teacher in such an instance, the pupil would usually say very humbly, " have you not, our Rabbi, taught us before the contrary? " [10]

Teachers, furthermore, were always advised to be concise in speech while giving instruction, so that their words might be better understood and remembered. This accounts, too, for the terseness of expression in the Tannaitic writings. The teachers also encouraged the students to use only clean and wholesome language.[11] In fact, they advised the students to use their exact manner of speech.[12] At times teachers would refuse to expound or even to repeat a statement, in order to make the students more attentive and industrious.[13] If a student made a keen observation, the teacher at times would respond " thou sayest well," so as to encourage him to become even more zealous in his study.[14] People were advised that in studying the Torah they should choose those topics that had a special interest for them, " that their heart desired." [15] This psy-

[7] Aboth, 4, 13.
[8] Isaiah, 30, 20; Erubin, 13b.
[9] *Ibid.*, 53b-54a; Sifri on Deut., 6, 7.
[10] Sifri on Numbers, 19, 2.
[11] Pesahim, 3b, משום ר"מ לעולם ישנה אדם לתלמידו דרך קצרה. *Ibid.*, 3a, תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל לעולם יספר אדם בלשון נקייה
[12] Eduyoth, 1, 3, אלא שאדם חייב לומר בלשון רבו also commentaries on same.
[13] Sifra on Leviticus, 15, 13.
[14] Mekilta on Exodus, 19, 24.
[15] Abodah Zarah, 19a, פריש רבי ואמר אין אדם לומד תורה אלא ממקום שלבו חפץ.

chological precept of education was followed as much as possible even in the schoolhouses. To begin the lesson from a point of common interest was a wise pedagogical principle of the Rabbis.

Regarding discipline the Rabbis applied another wise psychological principle. They taught, " always push (the students) away with the left hand, and draw them near with your right." [16] This suggestion certainly required tact. Outwardly the teacher ought to appear to be very strict with his pupils, yet in reality he must be their friend and counsellor. Never must a pupil be afraid to ask his teacher for guidance or for an explanation of which he was in need. " Throw gall among the pupils " [17] was an advice to be followed only on rare occasions. Teachers were never to forget the case of Elisha the Prophet, who because of being too strict with his pupil, caused the disciple to degenerate. Such a thing, it was hoped, would not occur again.

Methods of Teaching

From the early period of the Soferim we have extant the following Biblical verse that throws some light on the methods employed by the Scribes in conducting adult education: " And they read in the book, in the Law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." [18] Traditionally this passage was construed to mean that the text of the Scriptures was first read in the original Hebrew, then translated into the spoken Aramaic, and then studied in some detail.[19] From the text itself and from its traditional explanation it is safe to conclude that the Pentateuch was read carefully and distinctly in the original, translated into the vernacular, after which mention was made again of the specific laws referred to in the reading, including all their various traditional details. Finally the people were made to see how

[16] Sotah, 47a.
[17] Ketuboth, 103b.
[18] Nehemiah, 8, 8.
[19] Nedarim, 37b; Megillah, 3a.

all these details were expounded from and contained in the reading. This form of adult education was composed of all the three elements of Jewish education, Mikra, Mishnah, and Talmud.

How were the children taught to read? At first the teacher would write several letters of the alphabet on a tablet and have the child identify each one by name. In order to be certain that the child could easily recognize them, the teacher at times reversed their order.[20] After having mastered the entire alphabet the child was introduced to some simple Hebrew words and shown how to associate the sounds of the single letters in the pronunciation of these words. At the same time, the child was also told their meaning or translation. Since Hebrew has no vowels and the vowel signs had not as yet been developed, reading was not an easy task. In spite of these handicaps, however, the study of reading was by no means mechanical. When the child was presented with a word that could be read in diverse ways, he was told to look at the context, a word or two before or after the word in question, in order to ascertain the correct meaning and reading. Certain elementary rules of grammar were taught the child simultaneously with reading. After completing successfully some such exercises, the child would be introduced to the reading and translation of the Pentateuch, whereby his Hebrew vocabulary increased to such an extent that in a year or two he would be able to read and translate a lengthy Hebrew passage without assistance.

Morris presents a fantastic theory in reference to Hebrew reading of old. He would have us believe that reading as such did not exist even during Talmudic times. His argument, in part, is as follows: "One illustration will suffice. The three consonants, *d b r,* may be read in eight or nine different ways, according to the vowels with which they are combined. . . . Now, what could a teacher do with such material? . . . He would not attempt the im-

[20] Aboth of Rabbi Nathan, 6 and 15; Sabbath, 31a.

possible: teaching single words. More than that: reading as a subject for itself, independent of a particular text, did not exist for him at all; there was no means of teaching it. In fact, it is nowhere mentioned. Reading in those times always meant the reading of a special book—the only book available, the Bible. Writers who speak of 'reading' as a separate subject . . . are projecting the conditions of their own time into the school of the Talmudic period." [21]

This theory of Morris confirms, of course, his other theory regarding the subject of writing. If reading was not a subject in the school curriculum of old, how could the children be expected to write? That writing was also excluded from the school program is, therefore, a logical corollary of this newly expounded view in regard to reading. This entire theory, however, is, to say the least, an over-exaggeration. That writing was an integral part of the curriculum has already been demonstrated. Similarly, reading was not excluded from the educational program. There are many words in Hebrew that can be read only one way. There are many more words in Hebrew that can be read only in two ways, one form when the word occurs in the middle of a passage, and another reading, slightly changed, when the word occurs at the end of a sentence. The child would experience no difficulty in recognizing all these words. Even a Hebrew word that can be read in eight or nine different ways when singled out by itself, can only be read in one way when checked with the context. There is little reason for believing that on account of this difficulty, the subject of reading was entirely excluded from the educational system.

Since most of the teachings in the secondary and higher schools had to be memorized by the pupils, it was customary that the teacher repeat each exercise several times. Generally, each assignment was repeated four times.[22]

[21] *The Jewish School,* pp. 154-5.

[22] Erubin, 54b, מכאן א"ר אליעזר חייב אדם לשנות לתלמידו ארבעה פעמים.

Some teachers of the colleges followed a procedure of teaching a new lesson in the evening, repeating it in the morning, again at noon, and finally in the afternoon.[23] If necessary, the teacher repeated the lesson even more frequently. The students were given sufficient time to memorize each exercise. Usually they memorized the assignments by repeating them with an intonation in the form of a song.[24] They found that this method produced better retention. Constant repetition, the Rabbis taught, not only assured retentiveness but also produced greater clarity. Hillel said that he who studied his exercise one hundred and one times was much superior to him who studied it only one hundred times.[25] This should not be interpreted to mean that Hillel believed that there was a particular and mystic quality in the number, one hundred and one. The numbers used are only illustrative. Hillel would similarly agree that the one who studied his exercise one hundred and two times was superior to the one who studied it only one hundred and one times. Some teachers employed mnemonic devices in teaching.[26] This was of real aid to students in memorization.

[23] Menahoth, 18a, והתניא אמר רבי כשהלכתי למצות מדותי אצל ר"א בן שמוע . . . מצאתי יוסף הבבלי יושב לפניו והיה חביב לו ביותר עד לאחת אמר לו רבי השוחט את הזבח להניח מדמו למחר מהו אמר לו כשר ערבית אמר לו כשר שחרית אמר לו כשר צהרים אמר לו כשר מנחה אמר לו כשר אלא שר"א פוסל . . .

[24] This explains the words of Rabbi Akiba, זמר בכל יום זמר בכל יום "a song each day," (Sanhedrin, 99b, and Rashi) as meaning simply: be certain to study Torah each day of your life. See also Megillah, 32a, and Tosafot.

[25] Hagigah, 9b.

[26] This might explain a question that has puzzled many scholars. Why is the name of the second Order of the Mishnah in singular form, *Moed,* Festival, while all of the others are in plural? It is the opinion of the author that this is a mnemonic sign, like so many others in the Talmud, to indicate that the names of the first and last books of that one Order are also in the singular form, whereas the names of the first and last books of all the other Orders are in plural form just as the form of the name of the Order. If this be true, then the name of the first book of the fourth Order, *Nezikin,* Damages, would necessarily be in plural form. This would coincide with the view of Maimonides and other great scholars, who count the three *Babas* as one book. The name of this treatise would hence be *Nezikin* (or *Babas*).

Rabbi Judah b. Ilai was especially famous for using this method. The Mishnah, for example, records: "The Two Loaves were seven handbreadths long and four wide and their horns were four fingerbreadths high. The loaves of the Shewbread were ten handbreadths long and five wide and their horns were seven fingerbreadths high. Rabbi Judah says: Lest thou shouldest err (remember but the words) ZaDaD, YaHaZ." [27] The six consonants of these last two words have, respectively, the numerical values 7, 4, 4, 10, 5 and 7. In remembering these two words the students avoided confusing the various numbers mentioned in the exercise. At times, the letters of the alphabet were not used for their numerical values, but rather as abbreviations of words beginning with those characters. A good illustration of the latter usage is the familiar statement of Rabbi Judah, "DeZaKh, EDaSh, B'AChaB," that is now said on the eve of Passover in the Haggadah and that indicates the names of the ten plagues that had come upon the Egyptians before they let the Jews depart from their land.

Wherever possible the Rabbis, moreover, liked to tie up their explanations with the etymology of the words of Scriptures. They oftentimes analyzed certain difficult words of the Pentateuch as being compounds of two or more simpler words that really explained them.[28] This seems to be an early attempt at philology.

In teaching, the Rabbis were always careful to report every statement in the name of him who first said it.[29] In this their task was not unlike that of the modern student of research who is required to give the source of his statements. In Jewish education this method was of paramount importance, so that the student could properly and logically compare one statement with another, since the different authors might have held contrary opinions. Even when certain views were unacceptable as final law, they were

[27] Menahoth, 11, 4.

[28] See, for example, Hullin, 63a, תניא נמי הכי דוכיפת שהודו כפות; Sanhedrin, 4b, והתניא לטטפת לטטפת לטוטפות הרי כאן ארבע דברי רבי ישמעאל ר"ע אומר אינו צריך טט בכתפי שתים פת באפריקי שתים.

[29] Aboth, 6, 6 end.

still recorded in the *Mishnah* for the moral effect they produced, as is explained in the following: "And why do they record the opinions of Shammai and Hillel when these do not prevail? To teach the future generations that none should persist in his opinion, for lo, 'the fathers of the world' did not persist in their opinion." [30] Where this explanation did not suffice, another reason was given for the above policy of the Rabbis as follows: "why do they record the opinion of the individual against that of the majority when it does not prevail? That if one shall say, 'I have received such a tradition,' others may reply, 'thou didst hear it only as the opinion of such-a-one.'" [31]

The teachers were, furthermore, advised to pause after every lesson or after every important point so that the students might reflect upon it and better understand it. The Rabbis were very emphatic in this advice. They explained that when God taught Moses the Law, He also paused after every section and after every subject. Now, if this were required by Moses who was taught by God Himself, how much more so in the case of the common man receiving instruction from the common man.[32] These rest periods were not uniform in length, however. The teacher had to use his own discretion in the matter.

The students were also advised not to ask their teacher a question as soon as he entered the schoolhouse, but to wait rather until he became composed. Similarly, a teacher on entering the academy and finding the students engaged in study, should not "jump" into the discussion, but should wait until he had ascertained the topic that was being studied.[33]

Another important method of teaching employed in the Tannaitic period and perhaps even earlier must not be overlooked. After teaching and discussing the laws in full detail, the teachers summarized the various items of each law or of several laws into a few brief general conclusions. This is shown from a careful observation of the text of

[30] Eduyoth, 1, 4.
[31] *Ibid.*, 6.
[32] Sifra on Leviticus, 1, 1.
[33] Tosefta, Sanhedrin, 7, 5.

the Mishnah. The following may serve as an illustration: " Some women are permitted in marriage to their husbands and forbidden to their brothers-in-law; some are permitted in marriage to their brothers-in-law and forbidden to their husbands; some are permitted to both, and some are forbidden to both." [34] At times the summary would be very much like a mathematical formula which if expounded or analyzed easily yielded all the various details that were inherent in it. This method was especially used in the colleges and in the secondary schools.

In order to facilitate memorization the Rabbis, furthermore, oftentimes combined the study of many different subjects that had one common feature. For example, when in the course of study the following characteristic was noted, two things differing from one another only in one or two respects, a total of thirteen various subjects that had this common feature were listed together, as follows: " First Adar differs from Second Adar only in the reading of the Scroll and in giving gifts to the poor. A Festival-day differs from the Sabbath only in the preparing of necessary food. The Sabbath differs from the Day of Atonement only in that for the wanton profaning of the one, punishment is by man's hand, and for the wanton profaning of the other by Extirpation. A man that is forbidden by vow to have any benefit from his fellow differs from him that is forbidden by vow to take any food from him only in the treading of his foot (in the other's domain) and the use of vessels in which necessary food is not prepared. . . . The leper that is pronounced clean after having been shut up differs from the leper that has been certified clean only in the cutting off of the hair and the Bird-offerings. The Books of Scripture differ from phylacteries and *Mezuzahs* only in that the Books may be written in any language, while phylacteries and *Mezuzahs* may be written in the Assyrian writing only. . . ." [35] The Rabbis frequently, for the same reason, enumerated

[34] Yebamoth, 9, 1, and Tosafot.
[35] Megillah, 1, 4-11.

the definite number of laws relative to the subject. The following are illustrations selected at random: "The main classes of work (forbidden on Sabbath) are forty save one," "Fifteen women render their co-wives, and the co-wives of their co-wives (and so on, without end) exempt from *halitzah* and levirate marriage; and these are they: . . ." and "The four primary causes of injury are . . ."[36]

In conclusion a Tannaitic statement is presented that lists forty-eight qualities by which learning of the Law is acquired. It includes a number of the pedagogical methods and principles that are discussed above. It is more concerned, however, with listing the many elements of piety which merit, according to the views of the Rabbis, the acquisition of Torah.

Torah is greater than priesthood or kingship; for kingship is acquired by thirty excellences and the priesthood by twenty-four; but Torah by forty-eight. And these are they: by study, by the hearing of the ear, by distinct pronunciation, by the understanding of the heart, by awe, by reverence, by humility, by cheerfulness, by attendance on the Sages, by consorting with fellow-students, by close argument with disciples, by sedateness, by knowledge of the Scripture, by knowledge of the Mishnah; by moderation in business, in worldly occupation, in pleasure, in sleep, in laughter; by longsuffering, by a good heart, by faith in the Sages, by resignation under chastisement, by being one that recognizes his place, that rejoices in his lot, that makes a fence around his words, that claims no merit for himself; by being one that is beloved, that loves God, that loves mankind, that loves well-doing, that loves rectitude, that loves reproof, that shuns honour, that boasts not of his learning, that delights not in making decisions of law, that helps his fellow to bear his yoke, that judges him favorably, that establishes him in the truth, that establishes him in peace, that occupies himself assiduously in his study, that asks and makes answer, that hearkens and adds thereto, that learns in order to teach, that learns in order to practise, that makes his teacher wiser, that retells exactly what he has heard, and that reports a thing in the name of him that said it.[37]

[36] Sabbath, 7, 2; Yebamoth, 1, 1; Baba Kama, 1, 1.
[37] Aboth, 6, 6.

Chapter VII

EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

The Position of Women
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The Position of Women

In order to evaluate properly female education in the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim, one must be fully aware of the prevailing status of the Jewish woman. This subject has unfortunately not as yet received adequate and just treatment. Some scholars have been confused in trying to make certain general conclusions hold good for the status of all Oriental women. Others have been confused in thinking that the position of the Jewish woman was uniform throughout the long and varied history of the Jews, and have, therefore, committed in their writings many anachronisms, especially in taking the notions prevalent during the last several centuries among the Jews of Eastern Europe as characteristic of Jewish regard toward womankind in general. Still others erred simply in comparing and in evaluating the ancient sources.

To avoid these pitfalls, the following concise question is formulated as the basis for a brief discussion on the subject. Were women held as inferior to men by the Jews in the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim? The answer to this question may be found by one of two methods: an examination of the status of women in Jewish Law or a careful exploration of all the other ancient writings in reference to women. It is the opinion of the author, however, that both channels must be utilized to the fullest extent in the investigation if accuracy is desired. By comparing the one with the other and by letting each supplement the other, error may be eliminated.

In examining the Jewish Law as it was formulated in the periods under consideration here, one may come to

the superficial conclusion that women were regarded as far inferior to men. Women, for instance, were not permitted as witnesses or as judges. They were exempt, like slaves and minors, from observing a number of the Biblical precepts. They were exempt from the obligation of studying Torah. They could not be counted in the quorum of ten adults necessary for the divine service in the Synagogue. In fact women had a gallery separate from the men in the Temple at Jerusalem. As for divorce a wife was entirely subject to the will of her husband. Polygamy was permitted by Jewish Law only to the man. In case the husband died without offspring, the wife was subject to the will of his brother who had the alternative of either marrying her or releasing her by the ceremony of *halitza*, without which such a widow could not marry again in the lifetime of her husband's brothers. After the birth of a child the mother had to observe a period of purification, which was twice as long in the case of a female as of a male infant. These facts certainly tempt one to the above conclusion. Yet, to assert from these considerations that woman was generally disparaged and held inferior to man is questionable. It shows a lack of understanding of the essential character of the Law for the Jewish people.

It must be remembered that the Jews believed that their Law originated from God, that it was handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai. To the Jews, the Law was like creation and nature, the work of God. An analogous argument is now presented in defense of the above conclusion. Let us say, for example, that since we find today that women are physically weaker than men and are by nature subject to the pains and hazards of childbearing, women are held to be inferior socially. This argument is, of course, ridiculous. Nature by itself cannot be taken as a criterion of social standing. Similarly, all the above related facts of Jewish Law cannot determine the social status of the Jewish woman. They might tell us of certain handicaps and restrictions that women experienced in Jewish life, but they do not reveal any evidence that the

social status of the woman in those days was inferior to that of man.

Similarly, the conclusion that "in Jewish Law, the woman was on the same plane with minors, slaves, and people of unsound mind"[1] is no proof. On the contrary, women were legally required to observe *all* the prohibitions and *many* of the positive precepts of the Torah, while minors and people of unsound mind were not so obligated. Moreover, if a certain law applied to women and to minors, slaves, and people of unsound mind, it did not necessarily mean that these were all on the same plane even in reference to that detail unless one could prove that the particular law applied to all of them for the one and same reason. One familiar with Jewish Law knows, however, that the contrary was invariably true. Take for illustration the fact that the King of Israel, women, slaves, minors and half-wits could not serve as witnesses or as judges in accordance with Jewish Law. Were all these excluded solely for the reason of their unreliability? If that were true, they would all be on the same plane in regard to that law. Obviously, all were not rejected for that reason, for the King of Israel would certainly not be put in that category. As for the women, one can easily demonstrate from other instances of Jewish Law, especially the law pertaining to prohibitive and permissible foods, that they were certainly considered reliable and trustworthy. Such generalizations as the above are untenable.

The foregoing discussion has shown us the many elements of Jewish Law that will not reflect the social status of women in the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. What elements then will yield us this information? The laws that were newly developed during those periods by the Sages and Rabbis in relation to womanhood and that were not expounded directly from the

[1] Mordecai M. Kaplan, "The Status of the Jewish Woman," in *Hadassah News Letter*, April, 1936.

Pentateuch may afford a glimpse of the social status of the Jewish woman.

During the Second Commonwealth marriage, for example, was solemnized with a contract containing the mutual obligations of the respective parties.[2] Most of these duties were decreed by the Sages to apply even in those cases where such a contract was not actually written. On the whole these laws show a high regard for womanhood. In fact the duties of the man to his wife were more numerous than the reciprocal obligations.[3] These laws aimed for the establishment of mutual respect and understanding as the basis of a happy home. Although a man was permitted by Law to practice polygamy in the days of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim, there is no record of such a case.[4] This furnishes some evidence that Jewish society was generally opposed to that practice. In addition, the Scriptural law that required a strict separation between man and wife at every menstruation for a period of at least seven days always made for better harmony and love within the home. As expressed by one Sage, " it endeared her to her husband as on the day she entered the nuptial canopy." [5] With such a happy state of affairs in the homes, it appears idle to talk of an inferior social status of women. This conclusion is supported further by the fact that although it was possible for a man to divorce his wife with ease according to the ancient Jewish Law, little evidence of such divorces in these periods of Jewish history is found.

This brief and general discussion will suffice as evidence

[2] See, for example, Yebamoth, 15, 3. From the words, מספר כתובתה נלמוד, used by the Bet Shammai, we may infer that the marriage contract was quite an ancient institution in Israel. See also J. T. Ketuboth, chapter 8 end.

[3] See Ketuboth, 4. An excellent summary of these laws is given by Maimonides, הלכות אישות, 12, 1-5.

[4] The case of Rabbi Tarfon recorded in Tosefta, Ketuboth, 5, 1, is only to the effect that he betrothed three hundred women in a case of emergency, but he did not marry them. As for King Herod, he was considered among the Jews more Edomite than Jew.

[5] Niddah, 31b.

of Jewish Law in reference to the social position of the Jewish woman. We shall now examine other ancient Jewish sources for further information on this subject.

The most popular idea current among the Jews in the ancient days was probably none other than the story of creation as related in the first few chapters of Genesis. The child was introduced to it in his tenderest and most impressionable age. This lesson was supposed to have a dominant influence in moulding character. In the first place, it inculcated belief in the omnipotence of God, the Creator of all things. Secondly, it gave a definite explanation regarding the origin of man and woman. Man was created from the dust of the ground; woman from the rib of man. The origin of man was hence considered more humble than that of woman. Woman was created to be the helpmate of man. Jews, unlike the Greeks, did not regard marriage as primarily an obligation to the state or a necessary evil, but rather as the fulfillment of the good design of creation. Moreover, in the original plan of creation man and woman were obviously intended to be one. Even when woman was separated from man, the unity was not entirely broken, for " therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." [6] In accepting this Biblical narrative as sacred truth, men must have regarded women as their equals.

The general spirit of the ancient writings in reference to the status of the Jewish woman is beautifully conveyed in

[6] Genesis, 2, 24. Usually scholars derive an altogether different sentiment from the story of creation. Nathan Morris in his chapter on " The Woman and her Education " says, for example, "Already in the story of the creation the woman is told in so many words: ' and he shall rule over thee.' " One familiar, however, with the original sources of Jewish learning knows that the Jews hardly ever interpreted those words so literally. They construed the sentence, " thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee," to mean rather that although the longing for husband and motherhood is the most powerful instinct in woman, it is up to man to do the wooing. Even Josephus whose regard for womankind was not of the highest as shown later, omits entirely, for this reason, mention of this explicit Biblical statement in the opening chapter of his *Antiquities of the Jews*. See also Erubin, 100b.

the following words of the prophet Malachi: " she is thy companion and the wife of thy covenant." [7]

There are, however, certain statements recorded in some of the ancient sources that strike a different note. While they do not refute the above contention, they do represent different opinions current at this time. If these statements are carefully and correctly studied, they often yield a different meaning. An illustration is, " and do not talk much with womankind." [8] Superficially, this advice casts a reflection upon women. A careful examination of the passage in the original reveals, however, that the Hebrew word used for " talk " refers only to " idle speech " or " gossip " and the like.[9] That advice parallels, therefore, the following: " All my days have I grown up among the Sages and I have found naught better for a man than silence . . . and he that multiplies words occasions sin." [10]

As regards those individuals who spoke disparagingly of women, it is the opinion of the author that they might have been influenced by foreign philosophies and folkways. Among Alexandrian Jews, for instance, woman was held of less account than man, because Greek philosophy and mores greatly influenced them. The best example is, of course, Philo. In one place he says, " *Dothan* means ' a thorough forsaking,' and is the symbol of a soul that has in no half measure but completely run away from those empty notions which resemble the practices of women rather than those of men." [11] Perhaps Philo was imbued with this attitude toward women through Greek influences. In Palestine, however, Hellenism made comparatively little progress, and the Jewish attitude toward womankind generally prevailed.

Another illustration of the above may be cited in the case of Josephus. In his summary of the laws of Moses he made the following observation: " Let not the testimony of women be admitted on account of their levity and the

[7] Malachi, 2, 14.
[8] Aboth, 1, 5.
[9] See יין לבנון on above.
[10] Aboth, 1, 17.
[11] " De Fuga et Inventione," XXIII.

boldness of their sex." [12] This explanation of the law prohibiting women to act as witnesses was never given by the ancient Rabbis and Sages. In fact, their writings suggest an altogether different reason linked with the Psalmist statement, " All glorious is the king's daughter within the palace." [13] Doubtless, Josephus, writing his works in the city of Rome and in the Greek language, was influenced by the Greek and Roman attitudes toward women.

There is, however, a Tannaitic statement to the effect that women are light-minded.[14] Chiefly on the strength of this assertion, a modern writer concludes that the woman in those days, " was usually regarded as a light-minded, irresponsible creature." [15] This conclusion seems unwarranted when one examines the context of the remark. In reviewing carefully the Talmudic sources one may ascertain that the statement was used by the Rabbis only relative to their belief that women could not withstand great torture or temptation as well as men.

Furthermore, the family was the base or foundation of all Jewish social life. In the home the mother was accorded honor and fear by her children equal to that of the father, as the following Tannaitic saying discloses: " It is revealed and known before Him by whose word the world came into being that a man honors his mother more than his father because she sways him with persuasive words. Therefore in the commandment to honor, He mentions the father before the mother. And it is revealed and known before Him by whose word the world came into being that a man is more afraid of his father than of his mother because he teaches him the Torah. Therefore in the commandment to fear He mentions the mother before the father. Where something is imperfect Scripture seeks to make it complete." [16]

[12] *Antiquities of the Jews,* IV., 8, 15.
[13] Psalms, 45, 14.
[14] Kiddushin, 80b; Sabbath, 33b.
[15] Nathan Morris' *The Jewish School,* p. 220.
[16] Mekilta on Exodus, 20, 12; Kiddushin, 30b-31a.

From the moralistic writings of the Second Commonwealth, one may also infer that the Jews did not hold their women in low esteem. Unfortunately, many of the modern writers dealing with this theme have let their prejudices blind them. They have usually selected and discussed only those sayings that fitted their pre-conceived ideas, and passed over in silence many passages that demonstrated the contrary. It is, similarly, wrong to argue on the strength of several recorded statements derogatory to women that the female sex was generally held inferior. Even in modern civilized countries one may find in newspapers, magazines and books many statements uncomplimentary to women. A close study of all the ancient Jewish texts, moreover, reveals at least one flattering statement, if not more, for each unflattering statement about women.

The following parallel verses of Ecclesiasticus illustrate the above: "Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die.—Forego not a wise and good woman, for her grace is above gold." "Give me any plague but the plague of the heart; and any wickedness, but the wickedness of a woman.—A friend and companion never meet amiss, but above both is a wife with her husband." "A wicked woman abateth the courage and maketh an heavy countenance. . . .—A slothful man is compared to the filth of a dunghill: every man that takes it up will shake his hand." "An evilnurtured son is the dishonor of his father that begat him, and a foolish daughter is born to his disgrace." [17]

Although in Jewish social life the position of the woman was generally equal to that of the man, parents usually desired sons in preference to daughters, for two reasons. The first was a purely selfish one. The upbringing of a daughter required more care and anxiety on the part of parents than did that of a son as ben Sira forcefully claims: "The father waketh for the daughter, when no man knoweth, and the care for her taketh away sleep: when she is young, lest she pass away the flower of her

[17] Ecclesiasticus, 25, 24; 7, 19; 25, 13; 40, 23; 25, 23; 22, 2 and 3.

age; and being married, lest she should be hated; in her virginity, lest she should be defiled and gotten with child in her father's house; and having a husband, lest she should misbehave herself; and when she is married, lest she should be barren." A morally lax daughter was the greatest calamity that could befall parents, as the further words of this sage indicate: "Keep a sure watch over a shameless daughter, lest she make thee a laughingstock to thine enemies, and a byword in the city and a reproach among the people, and make thee ashamed before the multitude." [18] Then, too, since Jewish parents always desired to see their children happily married and blessed with progeny, they were more anxious about the daughters than sons. Theoretically, the man had two alternatives when he was not pleased with his wife or when he was not blessed with offspring: he could pay her the sum stipulated in the marriage contract and divorce her, or he was able to marry another woman and retain both wives.

The second reason for the preference for sons was a purely idealistic one. Since women were exempt from fulfilling most of the positive precepts of the Torah, the observance of which was restricted to a certain time or season, they could not serve God in as many ways as could the men. Parents, in religious piety, hence desired sons who would serve God to the fullest extent. This explanation is explicitly recorded in the following statement of Rabbi Judah (c. 160 C. E.): "a man is obligated to offer three benedictions every day: for not being created a heathen, for not being created a woman, and for not being created an ignoramus . . . a woman, for woman is exempt from the commandments; an ignoramus, for 'an ignoramus dreads not sin, and an ignorant man cannot be saintly.'" [19] Although this statement is very likely not free of foreign influence, for it is recorded of Plato that he used to say, "I thank God that I was born Greek and not barbarian, freeman and not slave, man and not

[18] *Ibid.*, 42, 9-11.
[19] Tosef. Berakoth, 6, 23; Menahoth, 43b.

woman; but above all, that I was born in the age of Socrates," [20] it clearly demonstrates the truly Jewish point of view in regard to the preference for sons.

The domestic and indusrtial occupations of women were carefully defined. The domestic duties consisted chiefly of " grinding flour and baking bread and washing clothes and cooking food and nursing her child and making ready the bed and working in wool." [21] The industrial occupations of women generally included spinning, weaving, dyeing, caring for flocks, and guarding vineyards. Usually women also cared for the destitute and needy. It is interesting to note that married women were never compelled to work in the fields or at other tasks that taxed their physical strength; and from the ancient writings it is evident that women rarely engaged in labor of that kind.

The foregoing discussion, although in no way exhaustive, should suffice to convince an impartial critic who is able and willing to check all the sources mentioned of the truth. There can be little doubt that in Jewish social life woman was treated with respect and dignity. In this the Jews were different from most of the Oriental peoples as well as from the Greeks and Romans.

The Education of Girls

According to Jewish Law women were entirely exempt from studying Torah.[22] Fathers were not obligated to teach their daughters Torah, nor were women required to teach it to their sons. Girls and women were, therefore, not included at all by Law in the sphere of Jewish education and were actually excluded from the school system. Girls were not admitted as pupils in any of the schools, and women were not allowed as teachers. This does not mean, however, that girls received no education at all. In fact, the education of girls was quite extensive during the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim.

[20] See Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy,* chapter 1, 3.
[21] Ketuboth, 5, 5. [22] Kiddushin, 29.

Before elementary schools were established, girls received instruction in Mikra, the reading of the Scriptures, from the hands of their parents as did the boys. This practice was not discontinued with the founding of the elementary schools as far as the girls were concerned.[23] They were taught to read and write; they were also made somewhat familiar with such subjects as grammar, arithmetic, geography, and history, a knowledge of which was necessary for the full understanding of the Scriptures. They learned many prayers. In addition, they received instruction from their mothers in household duties. If the girls were not privileged to study the *Mishnah*, they learned, nevertheless, a great deal of its contents by observing and practising the customs of the home.

The education of a daughter proved a greater problem for the parents than that of a son. Not only was this true after the secondary and elementary schools were founded, which relieved the parents of the burden of educating their sons, but it was equally true in earlier times. Parents were especially anxious about the moral upbringing of their daughters as shown above. The girls were, therefore, carefully instructed in those axioms of the Bible and of the Apocrypha that stressed the importance of good manners and uprightness. That this education produced excellent results is evident from the ancient writings that relate the noble deeds of many virtuous women.

Since the girls received their education solely from their parents, its scope naturally varied in direct proportion to the knowledge possessed by the parents. For this reason the Rabbis advised that a man should always endeavor to marry the daughter of a scholar, " for if he die or if he be exiled, he can rest assured that his children will be scholars." [24] It must be remembered that the education

[23] See Nedarim, 4, 3, אבל מלמד הוא את בניו ואת בנותיו מקרא. The implication here is clearly to the effect that girls were generally taught Mikra.

[24] Pesahim, 49a.

of girls was entirely optional, since the Law did not demand it. However, because of the fact that women enjoyed a social status equal to men, parents gladly and willingly provided their daughters with quite a thorough education. Very few girls, indeed, were deprived of an elementary education.

As regards secondary and higher education, the practice among the Jews was not so uniform. Rabbi Eliezer (c. 100 C. E.) and some of his colleagues, for example, were of the opinion that girls must not be taught the Oral Law, *Mishnah* and *Talmud*, these studies being meant exclusively for boys and men. Ben Azzai held a revolutionary view to the effect that not only was it optional but also obligatory for parents to teach all these subjects to the daughters.[25] It seems that neither extreme doctrine was accepted by the majority. The wife of Rabbi Meir was well learned in Jewish Law, and several of her wise statements are recorded in the Talmud. The quotation in the preceding paragraph, furthermore, indicates that scholars did provide their daughters with a higher Jewish education, which they, in time, imparted to their children. One must not be misled, however, in thinking that girls generally received quite a complete higher education. The parents did not have sufficient time to give them all the necessary instruction. When elementary education of boys was parental, it was normally completed only at the age of sixteen years. In the periods of Jewish history which are here under investigation, girls were married about that age, thus excluding the possibility of their obtaining much of secondary or of higher education.

Why were the girls excluded entirely from the school system? If the Jews were opposed on moral grounds to a system of coeducation, why did they not establish separate schools for girls? This question is all the more puzzling in view of the fact that women enjoyed then a social status equal to men. The answer may be discovered in

[25] Sotah, 3, 4. See also Maimonides, הלכות תלמוד תורה, 1, 13.

either of the two sources, the Jewish Law and the special character of Jewish education. Fathers were compelled by the law to teach only their sons the Torah and all the inherited traditions. Likewise, adolescent boys and men were commanded to study Torah. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." [26] Girls and women were not so obligated. The school system was, therefore, established only for the boys in order to fulfil in proper manner these requirements of Jewish Law.

Furthermore, had the goal of Jewish education been merely intended for higher intellectual development, the Jews, perhaps, would have provided girls with educational facilities equal to that of the boys. The Jews did not consider the woman inferior in regard to mental capacities. In fact, the Jews believed that girls matured both physically and mentally earlier than the boys. There is evidence that some Rabbis were of the opinion that women also were endowed with greater intelligence than men.[27] However, since Jewish education was essentially devoted to character building, the girls could more readily forego the maximum education provided by the school system. Experience taught the Jews that the girls received a satisfactory character education at home. Their daughters learned those elements of virtue and piety that Torah and custom demanded in their homes. Boys, on the other hand, had to learn a great deal more: all the details of the many laws of the Torah and how these were deduced from Scripture. Girls, by nature, were also easier to handle than boys. So, if the fathers were occupied, mothers could successfully attend to the education of their daughters without undue hardship.

[26] Joshua, 1, 8.

[27] Niddah, 45b, ת"ר אלו דברי רבי . . . א"ר חסדא מ"ט דרבי דכתיב ויבן ה' את הצלע מלמד שנתן הקב"ה בינה יתירה באשה יותר מבאיש.

The Education of Women

Although women were not obligated to study Torah, it is interesting to note that they were definitely included in the set-up of practically all the agencies and institutions that were organized for the advancement of adult education. During the early part of the Second Commonwealth we find that " Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, both men and women . . . and he read therein . . . from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the Law." [28]

Women attended, especially on Sabbaths and holidays, the divine services at the Temple in Jerusalem and at all the synagogues in Palestine and the lands of the Diaspora where special galleries or halls were provided for them. Although they were not permitted to lead the congregation in worship or to read publicly the Holy Scriptures, they participated in all the prayers and listened to the readings and translations of the portions of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. They were present also at the sermons of the Rabbis on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. In fact some women attended these sermons more regularly than their husbands.[29] They were also regular attendants at the public discourses that were delivered at the synagogues prior to each festival. The only type of adult education denied to women was admission into the academies as auditors. All schoolhouses were closed to members of the female sex.

Many women assisted their husbands in teaching their sons, in the days when elementary education was parental. The whole precept of Proverbs, " My son, keep the commandment of thy father, and forsake not the teaching of thy mother," [30] applied in its literal sense in the days of the Second Commonwealth as it did in the First. The

[28] Nehemiah, 8, 2-3. [29] J. T. Sotah, 1, 4. [30] Proverbs, 6, 20.

girls, of course, were entrusted chiefly to the care of their mothers. This voluntary task of teaching perhaps made the mothers desirous of extending their own education as much as possible, in order to gain and maintain the respect of their pupil-children.

Some women were so imbued with a love for Torah that they encouraged their husbands to devote themselves for a number of years solely to Jewish education, while they willingly shouldered the economic responsibilities. The wife of Rabbi Akiba is an illustration of such a case. The Talmud records that this famous scholar once publicly acknowledged in the presence of his many disciples the debt he owed to his wife with these frank words: " All that I am, and all that you are, is owing to her." [31]

[31] Nedarim, 50a.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

Jewish Education Compared with Greek and Roman Education

Jewish Education and Modern Education

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The history of Jewish education during the days of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim—a period of approximately seven and one-half centuries—has already been presented in some detail. Several of the more prominent features of Jewish education are now briefly compared with those of the contemporary Greek and Roman educational systems. In conclusion, there is offered a summary of the important educational ideas and practices of the Jews together with a statement showing those which have and those which have not been carried over into modern education.

The outstanding difference between Jewish and Greek and Roman education was, of course, in the matter of aims. In Sparta and for the early Athenians the chief aim of education was to make good citizens. Individual excellence was stressed in its relation to public usefulness. "The whole purpose of early Athenian education was the development of virtue, but the virtues were always civic virtues." [1] Since good citizenship demanded the utmost development of the body and mind, a dual system of education consisting of the gymnasium and the music school was established. Great stress was laid on physical and military training. Notwithstanding the fact that the center of gravity of education for Plato was different from that which was proposed by Aristotle, for the one society and for the other the individual, the final goal was nevertheless essentially the same—the establishment of a well organized state. As for higher education, two additional aims were advanced by some of the Greek philosophers.

[1] Elmer H. Wilds, *The Foundations of Modern Education,* p. 93.

The goal of education for Socrates was the development of the power of thinking in order to enable man to arrive at fundamental universal moral principles. Other Greek philosophers held that since reflective reasoning was man's peculiar function, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake was man's highest good. University or higher education consisted primarily of philosophical speculations, although only a select few were considered capable of fully appreciating these studies. Greek philosophy, moreover, was little concerned with practical problems. It devoted itself to a thorough search for ultimate truth. It afforded a liberal education.

The chief aim of education in Rome was very much the same. In the early periods, it was undoubtedly preparation for full Roman citizenship including military, civic and economic aspects. Even in the later periods, when the goal of higher education was formulated in the one word, oratory, the underlying philosophy did not radically change. The orator was considered the finest type of citizen.

For the Jews, on the other hand, the religious motive was the dominating factor of education. All Jews were required to know the Law and to observe it in practice. Their education was hence thoroughly practical. It was integrated with all the activities of life. The development of the intellectual faculty was only a by-product of that education. The Jewish spirit was generally hostile to physical and military education. The Jews sought to excel other people only in the knowledge and observance of their laws. The complete universalization of this knowledge as expressed by the Prophet Isaiah, " for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," [1a] was always a Utopian dream of the Jewish people. The Jewish school system, as fully organized toward the end of the Second Commonwealth, certainly endeavored to carry this ideal into practice in so far as the Jews were concerned.

[1a] Isaiah, 11, 9.

The subject matter of early Roman education, from the middle of the fifth century to the middle of the third century before the common era, was comparable, to a certain extent, to that of Jewish education of the same time. The laws of the Twelve Tables comprised the chief content of Roman education in this early period. A modern American scholar in his history of education makes the following comments: "Not only were these laws committed to memory, but they were understood and mastered as a source of practical guidance for after life. In fact, with the Romans the subject matter of education bore directly upon life as it has done with few people. The importance of this study from the intellectual point of view must also be considered . . . the study of the Twelve Tables formed no mean intellectual discipline . . . no people, either before or since, has made such use of its own history in education. History, including biography and the study of Roman law, comprised the subject matter of early Roman education." [2] That Doctor Paul Monroe, in making these observations, did not conclude the history of Jewish education is unfortunate, because the Jewish educational system, while similar in character was more extensive than that of Rome. In the first place, the Holy Scriptures were exceedingly more inclusive and extensive than the Twelve Tables. Secondly, the Jewish child was not confined to the study of the written laws alone. He was also required to learn and memorize many specific oral details of each Scriptural law and how these were deduced from the text or otherwise originated. The early Roman education was not nearly as complete in this respect as that of the contemporary Jewish educational system. Whether the Romans knew of the early Jewish plan and employed it in their education would be interesting to investigate.

Unlike the elementary and secondary schools of the Jews which were free for rich and poor alike, most of the Greek and all of the Roman schools charged tuition fees.

[2] Paul Monroe, *Source Book of the History of Education for the Greek and Roman Period,* pp. 333-4.

As for the colleges, the practice of the Jews was the exact opposite to that of the Greeks. The founders of the Greek academies, for example, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and Epicurus, did not accept fees, but their successors did; while with the Jews, the colleges at first did exact a daily fee from the students for upkeep and administration; but, in time, during the Tannaitic period, this practice was abolished.

Another marked point of difference between the Jewish and the Greek and Roman schools was in the arrangement of the subject matter. The music school of the Greeks, it will be remembered, was presided over by the Nine Muses, which signified nine separate subjects or branches of study. The Roman schools similarly offered distinct subjects to their pupils. For the Jews, all subjects were integrated with the study of Torah. Music and dancing therefore had no place in the Jewish curriculum. These were learned, if at all, at the home or by way of apprenticeship as were the industrial arts and crafts of the time. Higher Jewish education fostered a creative spirit of originality to no lesser extent than did the philosophical and oratorical academies of Greece and Rome.

The general attitude toward all manual labor to the effect that it was menial and degrading persisted with the Greeks and the Romans much longer than it did with the Jews. During the Tannaitic period the great majority of Rabbis were decidedly in favor of earning a livelihood by means of some worldly occupation. These conditions may be accounted for by the fact the Greek emphasis was generally upon beauty and grace, while the Jews emphasized good moral action or character.

In regard to several points, however, Jewish education was essentially like that of the Greeks and the Romans. Jewish elementary schools admitted children at the age of six or seven years, while the Greek and Roman schools admitted them also at the age of seven. Up to that time all children were taught at home. Another point of similarity was in the education of the girls. Although Plato

held that women possessed the same abilities as men and should therefore receive a similar education, the view of Aristotle that "woman is a child in a larger growth" generally prevailed, and girls were excluded from the schools. Like their Jewish contemporaries, the girls of Greece and Rome received their education at home.

While the old Jewish system of education was also similar to that of the Greeks and Romans in some pedagogical methods and principles, yet, in others it was superior. Both endeavored to make the utmost use of memorization and of various means for developing and facilitating it. The Jews took greater account of individual differences. On the whole the wise principles of Quintilian were practiced in the Jewish elementary and secondary schools many decades before he wrote his treatise on education. The Jews did not believe, however, in teaching even their very young children through plays and games. To them education or Torah was a very serious matter. The interest of the child was aroused through other psychological methods as pointed out earlier in this study.

The specific points of similarity that have been noted between Jewish education and that of Greece and Rome do not necessarily imply, however, that one system was influenced by the other. The lack of evidence pertaining to this problem relegates such an assertion to the realm of pure conjecture. Doctor Boyd's statement, "There is a curious irony in the fact that the Jews, in seeking to save themselves from being overborne by the Greek culture, should have adopted the Hellenic institution of the school for their children and the Hellenic practice of disputation for their young men," [3] has little documentary proof. The Jewish colleges were founded by the Men of the Great Assembly who flourished in the fourth century before the common era. The story of the evolution of the Jewish school system and the internal contributing factors have

[3] William Boyd, *History of Western Education*, p. 64.

been presented. No one familiar with this history could see in it an " adoption of the Hellenic institution of the school." Similarly, the practice of disputation or discussion as the method of higher Jewish education goes back to a distant period of antiquity long before we hear of it practiced among the Greeks.

Jewish education differs from that of the Greeks and Romans in regard to the social position of the teachers. For the latter, the position of the schoolmaster was often that of a menial. The education of the young was usually entrusted to the slaves acquired by conquest. Intellectually and from an educational standpoint they no doubt were superior. With the Jews, this was not the practice. Not only were those who possessed considerable knowledge of the Law and who were known for their piety and sincerity able to qualify as teachers but socially they were held in highest regard. Slaves were excluded from Jewish education.

The greatest practical difference between the Jewish and the Greek and Roman schools, as may be inferred from the previous discussion, was in the content of education. For the Jews, Torah was the all-inclusive subject matter of education. It was concerned with guiding their daily conduct. The Rabbis taught that all other knowledge like " astronomy and geometry are but the peripheries of wisdom." [4] For the Greeks and Romans, however, these " peripheries of wisdom " were the central subjects. Even for Aristotle the subject of ethics, educationally, was not judged more important than the other subjects which he discussed. Furthermore, the Greek study of ethics consisted mainly of theoretical speculation upon the nature of man and the universe and was not primarily concerned with practical problems of conduct. Unlike Torah, it was, moreover, a subject for higher education only.

Which of the above systems of education was on the whole superior to the others? The fact that the Jewish

[4] Aboth, 3 end.

people still exist today, in spite of terrific persecutions, is an eloquent testimony of the fruit of one of the systems.

Jewish Education and Modern Education

From this study of Jewish education during the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim several general conclusions can be drawn. About two thousand years ago the Jews developed an elaborate school system that provided free universal and compulsory education for young and adolescent boys. The academies of higher learning at first charged an admission fee but later abolished this practice. In that respect they were in advance of most of the modern universities and colleges. In treating the evolution of the Jewish school system, note was taken of the fact that the colleges were founded first, later the secondary, and finally the elementary schools. Apparently, this seems the natural development of school systems to which the American system is no exception.

The main emphasis of Jewish education was upon ethical living instead of upon the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of culture. The educational philosophy of Dewey and other modern educators to the effect that education is activity and life properly lived, in opposition to the older doctrine that education is a storing up of knowledge as a preparation for life, is in many respects that of the ancient Jewish system of education. The criticism of modern education that it devotes so much time to teaching unrelated subjects, not properly fitted together, would not apply to ancient Jewish education which integrated even secular matters with the study of Torah, which was practically synonymous with Jewish life. Jewish education guarded against abrupt changes occurring when pupils were promoted from one level of education to the next higher. Modern education, however, is also striving to solve this problem.

Jewish education, moreover, was so constituted that it avoided the modern educational problem of how to re-

late attitudes to behavior or thought to action. Torah directed all conduct. The verbal instruction of the schools was directly tied up with all the practical exercises of life. All Jews knew that their every action must be performed in conformity with the Law. In this connection Josephus says, " For there are two ways of coming at any sort of learning, and a moral conduct of life; the one is by instruction in words, the other by practical exercises. Now, other lawgivers have separated these two ways in their opinions, and choosing one of those ways of instruction, or that which best pleased every one of them, neglected the other. . . . But for our legislator (Moses), he very carefully joined these two methods of instruction together: for he neither left these practical exercises to go on without verbal instruction, nor did he permit the hearing of the Law to proceed without the exercises for practice, but beginning immediately from the earliest infancy, and the appointment of every one's diet, he left nothing of the very smallest consequence to be done at the pleasure and disposal of the person himself. . . ." [5]

Of the seven cardinal aims of modern education—health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure time, and ethical character,—there is only one with which the Jewish school system was practically unconcerned. This was vocation. In the ancient days vocational and industrial training was achieved only by the method of apprenticeship as shown earlier in the study. The only exception to this rule was in the case of certain professions such as teacher, scribe, and judge. Jewish education definitely concerned itself with the other six items. Torah fostered their realization. Even citizenship was cared for, if this term be defined more broadly to include the concord of minds and manners among a people.

In one respect Jewish education of old outstrips modern

[5] *Against Apion,* Book II., 17-18.

education. For the Jews, education was definitely a life-long affair and did not cease with graduation. Every Jew, be he rich or poor, young or old, was obligated to study Torah every day of his life. The history of Jewish education, especially of the period of the Tannaim, affords many examples of artisans and industrial workers reserving part of their day for the further study of Torah. Of course, modern education expresses its hope that its graduates will continue their education, but just recently are organized efforts being made to transform this hope into reality.

If we except the fact that girls were excluded from the Jewish school system, Jewish education compares very favorably with the organization of modern education even in America. In giving equal consideration to the higher intellectual development of girls as of boys, modern education has neglected, on the other hand, to provide all girls with the knowledge of practical household duties which is necessary for training efficient and industrious home-makers. Modern feminine society certainly needs this sort of knowledge and training.

As noted earlier in the study, the Jews provided many forms of adult education for both men and women. These agencies, although perhaps not superior to or more numerous than the modern institutions, were utilized perhaps by a greater percentage of the community. More modern agencies of adult education; such as the press, the cinema, and the radio, of course are exempted from this comparison.

As for the pedagogical methods and principles employed in the schools, the Jews showed practical judgment and wisdom. Modern education benefits greatly from the study of psychology that has been recently developed. However, methodology apart from content has been overemphasized in some modern progressive schools with not too happy results. Jewish education of old can still show a wise discretionary course in this matter.

Regarding the success of the Jewish educational system, certain general observations might bear repetition. The

Jewish school system was completely organized during the period of the Second Commonwealth. That practically all Jewish boys received a good elementary training is evident from many ancient sources of which the following saying of Josephus may serve as example: " but for our people, if anybody do but ask any one of them about our laws, he will more readily tell them all than he will tell his own name, and this in consequence of our having learned them immediately as soon as ever we became sensible of any thing, and of our having them as it were engraven on our souls. Our transgressors of them are but few, and it is impossible, when any do offend, to escape punishment." [6] Evidence was given earlier that at least one-third of the general male population received also a rather thorough secondary education during the days of the Tannaim. These figures compare favorably with those of modern education even that of America.

The author has sympathy but not much understanding for a modern writer seemingly possessed at times with a desire for being different and ultra-scientific who claims that the " generally accepted view that a system of popular education, compulsory and ' universal,' whatever this latter term may be intended to express, was introduced among Jews by some authority before the destruction of the Second Temple shows a curious lack of historic perspective; it is the projection of a modern idea into a time and a set of conditions where it could not fit. Compulsory education in the modern sense, never existed among the Jews, nor, for that matter, amongst any other people in ancient times." [7]

Sufficient evidence has been presented that warrants our conclusions on this point; " historic perspective " notwithstanding, all our previous views are still sustained. As for the statement that compulsory education never existed among the Jews, the author believes the exact opposite.

[6] *Ibid.,* 19.
[7] Nathan Morris, *The Jewish School,* pp. 19-20.

In fact, education then was compulsory no less than it is today in modern society, because to the Jew, it was a religious obligation. Parents who neglected to provide their children with an education were practically, as was pointed out earlier in the study, ostracized from the Jewish community.

On the whole the history of Jewish education of the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim presents a picture of a practical and efficient educational system motivated by high ideals, which gradually developed into a system designed to meet the needs of the entire population as early as two thousand years ago, approximately. In final conclusion we quote Philo: "For the nature of the self-taught is new and higher than our reasoning, and in very deed Divine. . . . Do you not know that Hebrew mothers need no midwives for their delivery, but as Moses says, 'before the midwife come unto them, they are delivered,' that is before systems, arts, sciences, come in, they give birth with the cooperation of nature alone?" [8] That a people could develop such a satisfactory and complete educational system at so early a period of history is an astonishing phenomenon that indicates their genuine social insight and efficiency.

[8] "De Fuga et Inventione," XXX; *Exodus*, 1, 19.

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I. Primary Sources

II. Secondary Sources

- A. Old Hebrew Sources
- B. Modern Hebrew Sources
- C. French and German Sources
- D. General Histories and Source Books in English
- E. Treatises on Jewish Education in English

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This bibliography includes a list of all the books or treatises relating to the subject of Jewish education in the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim that were consulted in the preparation of this volume. In order that this list should be complete, even the popular compilations that offer no original and scholarly contribution and several treatises like that of Imber, purely fantastic and unreliable, were included.

Under primary sources are listed all the ancient writings that have been preserved from the days of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim. Some books of an earlier period; for example, many of the Books of the Bible, are also included under this heading, because they were used as texts for instruction during the periods investigated in this study. Under secondary sources are listed all the books that have originated in later periods but bear definite relation to the subject under discussion.

Though texts were examined in the original for the purpose of clarity of English style, accepted translations were consulted and often used in quoting; for example, the new translation of the Jewish Publication Society of America for the Bible, the Authorized Version for the New Testament, Colson's and Whitaker's for the works of Philo, Danby's for the Mishnah, and Lauterbach's for the Mekilta.

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4. Baraitas quoted in the two Talmuds.
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6. Targumim.
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8. The New Testament.

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VITA

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